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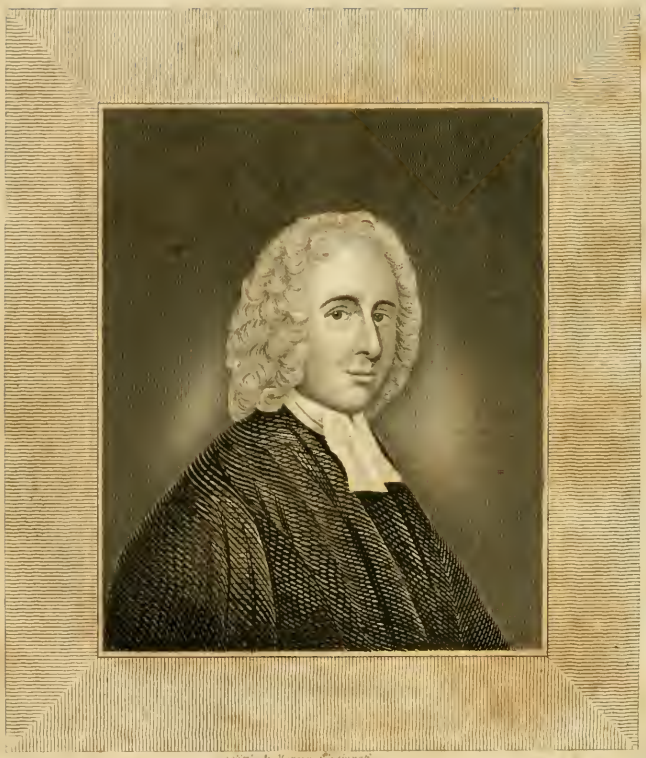

I. WATTS D. D.

THE WORLD TO COME:

OR,

DISCOURSES ON THE JOYS OR SORROWS

OF

DEATH, JUDGMENT AND ETERNITY:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED AN

ESSAY ON THE SEPARATE STATE OF SOULS,

AND

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING SELECT POEMS.

BY ISAAC WATTS, D. D.

WITH A PREFACE AND NOTES

BY JOHN BURTT, V. D. M.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

Dr. Isaac Watts, the author of the following Discourses, was born at Southampton, in England, in the year 1674. His parents were nonconformists, and his father was a sufferer for conscience' sake, having been imprisoned more than once for refusing to conform to the religion established by government. During his confinement, his afflicted and sympathising wife was sometimes seen sitting on a stone, near the prison door, with her son Isaac on her bosom. Isaac, at a very early age, gave promising indications of genius, and from fifteen to fifty, poetical composition contributed to his amusement, as it also did to his usefulness and fame. In his nineteenth year, he became a professed follower of Christ, and devoted himself to those studies, and assiduously cultivated those habits, which were calculated to prepare him for the sacred duties of a Christian minister. At the age of twenty-four, and on his birth-day, he preached his first sermon. During the first three or four years of his ministry, his labours were much interrupted by sickness; but he was so far restored as to labour with much acceptance and success, till 1712, when a violent fever so completely prostrated his constitution, that he was never afterwards able to discharge, statedly, the public duties of a pastor. During a period of thirty-six years, which he spent in a state of retirement, he laboured most laudably and industriously, to promote by his pen, that holy cause, which he was no longer permitted to plead from the sacred desk. In 1748, he died, in the 74th year of his age, sustained by the consolations, and animated with the hopes of that gospel, which he had so long been spared and privileged to recommend to others.

His poetical works are, for the greater part, well known, and favourably appreciated, by all who love pious sentiments expressed in an elegant simplicity of diction. His prose works are various and excellent. The writer of these remarks takes a pleasure in recording here his obligations to Dr. Watts' treatise "On the improvement of the mind," from which, in youth,

he derived more permanent advantage than from any other work of human composition. The Discourses contained in this volume, and generally published under the title of "The World to come," have been long known to the Christian public, and highly esteemed by pious people, of every degree of mental cultivation. The author combines, in the happiest manner, elegance with perspicuity, tenderness with fidelity, a vivacity of imagination with cogency of argument, clear statement, and impressive thought.

While I think that every serious Christian reader will agree with me, in a high estimate of the excellence of these Discourses, I would not conceal, and at the same time, I would not aggravate, the blemishes which I see in them. A few, and but a few sentences occur, in which there are expressions, which although not intended to teach error, are rather loose and unguarded. On several of the most remarkable of these, I have taken the liberty to comment briefly in the Notes, which the reader will find at the bottom of the pages, where the faulty expressions occur. It would not have been consistent with my respect for the author, nor with the sense which I entertain of my own imperfection, to enter my caveat against every turn of expression which might appear to me exceptionable: to notice some of these, I considered to be necessary, for the sake of guarding the inexperienced and unsuspecting reader from taking upon trust every thing which may fall from the pen of even a truly learned and pious man. With the few exceptions to which I have reference, the reader will find that the work is at once scriptural, luminous, and solemn, treating of the most awful subjects that can engage the attention of men, in a manner the most becomingly tender, and instructively interesting.

Besides these Notes, which I hope the intelligent reader will not consider captious, as they were not written in a captious spirit, there are a few others, intended for illustration. I might have increased the number of these; but in a work professedly, and I may add, pre-eminently practical, I judged it best not to divert the attention of the reader too often from the train of thought presented by the author.

The subjects treated of in the following pages are of universal concern; every human being, now on earth, is hastening on, as rapidly as time can carry him, to the joys or terrors of a "World to come." The change which we must all experience at death, and the ascertained or possible interests, which we may have in eternity, as they unspeakably surpass all earthly objects of contemplation, so they ought to have a suitable share of our daily attention, and awaken in us the most serious thoughts. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" What will be the amount of all our care, and toil, and acquirements, when calculated in the dying hour, if we have not cared and toiled for our eternal interests, and obtained a hope, through grace, of an inheritance in heaven? These are questions which we all should ask; and none

of us should rest, until we are enabled to adopt the language of the apostle, and say: "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that . . . . Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death: for to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

That the perusal of this volume may be blessed to the reader, and be a means of exciting him to live habitually in view of the glory of God, and the salvation of his soul, is the earnest prayer of his sincere well-wisher,

JOHN BURTT.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

Among all the solemn and important things which relate to religion, there is nothing that strikes the soul of man with so much awe and solemnity, as the scenes of death, and the dreadful or delightful consequents which attend it. Who can think of entering into that unknown region where spirits dwell, without the strongest impressions upon the mind arising from so strange a manner of existence? Who can take a survey of the resurrection of the millions of the dead, and of the tribunal of Christ, whence men and angels must receive their doom, without the most painful solicitude, 'What will my sentence be?' Who can meditate on the intense and unmingled pleasure or pain in the world to come, without the most pathetic emotions of soul, since each of us must be determined to one of these states, and they are both of everlasting duration?

These are the things that touch the springs of every passion in the most sensible manner, and raise our hopes and our fears to their supreme exercise. These are the subjects with which our blessed Saviour and his Apostles frequently entertained their hearers, in order to persuade them to hearken, and attend to the divine lessons which they published amongst them. These were some of the sharpest weapons of their holy warfare, which entered into the inmost vitals of mankind, and pierced their consciences with the highest solicitude.—These have been the happy means to awaken thousands of sinners to flee from the wrath to come, and to allure and hasten them to enter into that glorious refuge that is set before them in the gospel.

It is for the same reason that I have selected a few discourses on these arguments out of my public ministry, to set them before the eyes of the world in a more public manner, that if possible, some thoughtless creatures might be roused out of their sinful slumbers, and might awake into a spiritual and eternal life, through the concurring influences of the blessed Spirit.

I am not willing to disappoint my readers, and therefore I would

let them know before-hand, that they will find very little in this book to gratify their curiosity about the many questions relating to the invisible world, and the things which God has not plainly revealed. Something of this kind, perhaps, may be found in two discourses of *death and heaven*, which I published long ago: but in the present discourses I have very much neglected such curious enquiries. Nor will the ear that has an itch for controversy be much entertained here, for I have avoided matters of doubtful debate. Nor need the most zealous man of orthodoxy, fear to be led astray into new and dangerous sentiments, if he will but take the plainest and most evident dictates of Scripture, for his direction into all truth.

My only design has been to set the great and most momentous things of a future world in the most convincing and affecting light, and to enforce them upon the conscience with all the fervour that such subjects demand and require. And may our blessed Redeemer, who reigns Lord of the invisible world, pronounce these words with a divine power to the heart of every man, who shall either read or hear them.

The treatise which is set as an introduction to this book, * was printed many years ago without the author's name, and there, in a short preface, represented to the reader these few reasons of its writing and publication, viz.

The principles of atheism and infidelity have prevailed so far upon our age, as to break in upon the sacred fences of virtue and piety, and to destroy the noblest and most effectual springs of true and vital religion; I mean those which are contained in the blessed gospel.—The doctrine of the *resurrection* of the body, and the consequent states of *heaven* and *hell*, is a guard and motive of divine force; but it is renounced by the enemies of our holy Christianity: and should we give up the recompences of *separate souls*, while the deist denies the *resurrection of the body*, I fear between both we should sadly enfeeble and expose the cause of virtue, and leave it too naked and defenceless. The Christian would have but one persuasive of this kind remaining, and the deist would have none at all.

It is necessary therefore to be upon our guard, and to establish every motive that we can derive either from reason or Scripture, to secure religion in the world. The doctrine of the state of separate spirits, and the commencement of rewards and punishments, immediately after death, is one of those sacred fences of virtue which we borrow from Scripture, and it is highly favoured by reason, and there-

* In the present edition, the treatise, or Essay, referred to here, is placed at the end of the volume.—Ed.

fore it may not be unseasonable to publish such arguments as may tend to the support of it.

In this second edition of this small treatise, I have added several paragraphs and pages to defend the same doctrine, and the last section contains an answer to various new objections which I had not met with, when I first began to write on this subject. I hope it is set upon such a firm foundation of many Scriptures, as cannot possibly be overturned, nor do I think it a very easy matter any way to evade the force of them. May the grace of God lead us on further into every truth that tends to maintain and propagate faith and holiness.

In the first of these discourses, I have endeavoured to prove, that 'at the departure of the soul from the body by death, the rewards or punishments,' i. e. the joys or sorrows 'of the other world, are appointed to commence:' and I hope I have given, from the evidence of Scripture, such arguments to support this doctrine, as that the faith of Christians may not be staggered and confounded by different opinions, or made to wait for these events, through all the many years that may arise between death and the resurrection.

I know nothing besides this, that is made a matter of controversy; and I hope that the whole of these sermons, by the blessing of God, will be made happily useful to Christians, to awaken and warn them against the danger of being seized by death in a state unprepared for the presence of God, and the happiness of heaven, and to raise the comforts and joys of many pious souls in the lively expectation of future blessedness.

The last discourses of this book, especially the 'eternity of the punishments of hell,' have been in latter and former years made a matter of dispute; and were I to pursue my enquiries into this doctrine, only by the aids of the light of nature and reason, I fear my natural tenderness might warp me aside from the rules and the demands of strict justice, and the wise and holy government of the great God. But as I confine myself almost entirely to the revelation of Scripture in all my searches into the things of revealed religion and Christianity, I am constrained to forget or to lay aside that softness and tenderness of animal nature which might lead me astray, and to follow the unerring dictates of the word of God.

The Scripture frequently, and in the plainest and strongest manner, asserts the everlasting punishment of sinners in hell; and that by all the methods of expression which are used in Scripture to signify an everlasting continuance.

God's utter hatred and aversion to sin, in this perpetual punish-

ment of it, are manifested many ways; (1.) By the just and severe *threatenings* of the wise and righteous Governor of the world, which are scattered up and down in his word. (2.) By the *veracity* of God in his *intimations* or *narratives* of past events, as Jude v. 7.—"Sodom and Gomorrah suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." (3.) By his express *predictions*, Matth. xxv. 46, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment:" 2 Thess. i. 9, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction;" and I might add, (4.) by the *veracity* and *truth* of all his holy Prophets and Apostles, and his Son Jesus Christ at the head of them, whom he has sent to acquaint mankind with the rules of their duty, and the certain judgment of God in a holy correspondence therewith, and that in such words as seem to admit of no way of escape, or of hope for the condemned criminals.

I must confess here, if it were possible for the great and blessed God any other way to vindicate his own eternal and unchangeable hatred of sin, the inflexible justice of his government, the wisdom of his severe threatenings, and the veracity of his predictions, if it were also possible for him, without this terrible execution, to vindicate the veracity, sincerity, and wisdom of the Prophets and Apostles, and Jesus Christ his Son, the greatest and chiefest of his divine messengers; and then, if the blessed God should at any time, in a consistence with his glorious and incomprehensible perfections, release those wretched creatures from their acute pains and long imprisonment in hell, either with a design of the utter destruction of their beings by annihilation, or to put them into some unknown world, upon a new foot of trial, I think I ought cheerfully and joyfully to accept this appointment of God, for the good of millions of my fellow-creatures, and add my joys and praises to all the *songs and triumphs* of the heavenly world in the day of such a divine and glorious release of these prisoners.

But I feel myself under a necessity of confessing, that I am utterly unable to solve these difficulties according to the discoveries of the New Testament, which must be my constant rule of faith, and hope, and expectation, with regard to myself and others. I have read the strongest and best writers on the other side, yet after all my studies I have not been able to find any way how these difficulties may be removed, and how the divine perfections, and the conduct of God in his word, may be fairly vindicated without the establishment of this doctrine, as awful and formidable as it is.

'The ways' indeed of the great God and his 'thoughts are above our thoughts and our ways, as the heavens are above the earth;' yet I must rest and acquiesce where our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father's

chief Minister, both of his wrath and his love, has left me in the divine revelations of Scripture; and I am constrained therefore to leave these unhappy creatures under the chains of everlasting darkness, into which they have cast themselves by their wilful iniquities, till the blessed God shall see fit to release them.

This would be indeed such a new, such an astonishing and universal jubilee, both for devils and wicked men, as must fill heaven, earth, and hell, with hallelujahs and joy. In the mean time it is my ardent wish, that this awful sense of the terrors of the Almighty, and his everlasting anger, which the word of the great God denounces, may awaken some souls timely to bethink themselves of the dreadful danger into which they are running, before these terrors seize them at death, and begin to be executed upon them without release and without hope.

Note. Where these Discourses shall be used as a religious service in private families on Lord's-day evenings, each of them will afford a division near the middle, lest the service be made too long and tiresome.

DISCOURSES

ON THE

WORLD TO COME.

DISCOURSE I.

THE END OF TIME.

REV. X. 5, 6. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever,—that there should be time no longer.

THIS is the oath and the solemn sentence of a mighty angel who came down from heaven, and by the description of him in the first verse, he seems to be the "angel of God's presence, in whom is the name of God," even our Lord Jesus Christ himself, * who pronounced and sware that "Time should be no longer;" for all seasons and times are now put into his hand, together with the book of his Father's decrees, Rev. v. 7, 9. What special age or period of time in this world the prophecy refers to, may not be so easy to determine;† but this is certain, that it may be happily applied to the period of every man's life; for whensoever the term of our continuance in this world is finished, 'our Time,' in the present circumstances and scenes that attend it, 'shall be no more.' We shall be swept off the stage of this visible state into an unseen and eternal world: *Eternity* comes upon us at once, and all that we enjoy, all that we do, and all that we suffer in 'Time, shall be no longer.'

* Commentators are generally agreed, in considering the Angel, mentioned in the text, as Christ himself, or that which represented him to John, in the vision, as the Messenger of the covenant.—ED.

† Judicious expositors concur in believing this part of the prophecy to apply to that period, which immediately precedes the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and during the events which are introductory to the latter day of glory, predicted to the church.—ED.

Let us stand still here, and consider in the *first* place what awful and important thoughts are contained in this sentence; what solemn ideas should arise to the view of mortal creatures when it shall be pronounced concerning each of them, that 'Time shall be no more.'

1. 'The Time of the recovery of our nature from its sinful and wretched state shall be no longer.' We come into this world fallen creatures, children of iniquity, and heirs of death; we have lost the 'image of God' who made us, and which our nature enjoyed in our first parents; and instead of it we are changed into the 'image of the devil' in the lusts of the mind, in pride and malice, in self-sufficiency and enmity to God; and we have put on also the 'image of the brute' in sinful appetites and sensualities, and in the lusts of the flesh; nor can we ever be made truly happy till the image of the blessed God be restored upon us, till we are made holy as he is holy, till we have a divine change past upon us, whereby we are created anew and reformed in heart and practice. And this life is the only time given us for this important change. If this life be finished before the image of God be restored to us, this image will never be restored; but we shall bear the likeness of devils for ever; and perhaps the image of the brute too at the resurrection of the body, and be further off from God and all that is holy than ever we were here upon earth.

Of what infinite importance is it then to be frequently awakening ourselves at special seasons and periods of life to enquire, whether this image of God is begun to be renewed, whether we have this glorious change wrought in us, whether our desires and delights are fixed upon holy and heavenly things, instead of those sensual and earthly objects which draw away all our souls from God and heaven. Let it appear to us as a matter of utmost moment to seek after this change; let us pursue it with unwearied labours and strivings with our own hearts, and perpetual importunities at the throne of grace, lest the voice of him who swears that, 'there shall be Time no longer,' should seize us in some unexpected moment, and lest he swear in his wrath concerning us, "let him that is unholy be unholy still, and let him that is filthy be filthy still."

2. When this sentence is pronounced concerning us, 'the

season and the means of restoring us to the favour and love of God shall be no longer.' We are born 'children of wrath' as well as the sons and daughters of iniquity, Ephes. ii. 2. We have lost the original favour of our Maker and are banished from his love, and the superior blessings of his goodness; and yet, blessed be the Lord, that we are not at present for ever banished beyond all hope: This 'Time of life' is given us to seek the recovery of the love of God, by returning to him according to the gospel of his Son: Now is pardon and peace, now is grace and salvation preached unto men, to sinful wretched men, who are at enmity with God and the objects of his high displeasure; now the voice of mercy calls to us, "This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 2. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, let not your hearts be hardened to refuse it:" Now the fountain of the blood of Christ is set open to wash our souls from the guilt of sin; now all the springs of his mercy are broken up in the ministrations of the gospel: Now 'God is in Christ reconciling sinners to himself,' and 'he has sent us,' his ministers, 'to intreat you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God;' and we beseech you in his name, continue not one day, or one hour, longer in your enmity and rebellion, but be ye reconciled to God your Creator, and accept of his offered forgiveness and grace. 2 Cor. v. 20.

The moment is hastening upon us when this mighty angel, who manages the affairs of the kingdom of Providence, shall swear concerning every unbelieving and impenitent sinner, that the 'Time of offered mercy shall be no longer, the time of pardon and grace and reconciliation shall be no more:' The sound of this mercy reaches not to the regions of the dead; those who die before they are reconciled, die under the load of all their sins, and must perish for ever, without the least hope or glimpse of reconciling or forgiving grace.

3. At the term of this mortal life, 'the Time of prayer and repentance and service, for God or man, in this world, shall be no longer.' Eccl. ix. 10. "There is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest," whither we are all hastening. Let every sinful creature therefore ask himself, 'Have I never yet begun to pray? Never begun to call upon the mercy of God that made me? Never begun to repent of all my crimes

and follies? Nor begun in good earnest to do service for God, or to honour him amongst men?' Dreadful thought indeed! when, it may be, the next hour, we may be put out of all capacity and opportunity to do it for ever! As soon as ever an impenitent sinner has the vail of death drawn over him, all his opportunities of this kind are for ever cut off. He that has never repented, never prayed, never honoured his God, shall never be able to pray, or repent, or do any thing for God, or his honour, through all the ages of his future immortality. Nor is there any promise made to returning or repenting sinners in the other world, whither we are hastening. "As the tree falls," when it is cut down, "so it lies," and it must for ever lie, 'pointing to the north or the south,' to hell or heaven, Eccles. xi. 3.

And, indeed, no true prayer, no sincere repentance can be exercised after this life; for the soul that has wasted away all its time given for repentance and prayer, is, at the moment of death, left under everlasting hardness of heart; and whatsoever enmity against God and godliness was found in the heart in this world is increased in the world to come, when all manner of softening means and mercies are ever at an end. This leads me to the next thought.

4. 'How wretched soever our state is at death, the day of hope is ended, and it returns no more.' Be our circumstances never so bad, yet we are not completely wretched while the time of hope remains. We are all by nature miserable by reason of sin, but it is only despair that can perfect our misery. Therefore fallen angels are sealed up under misery because there is no door of hope opened for them. But in this life there is hope for the worst of sinful men: There is the word of grace and hope calling them in the gospel; there is the voice of divine mercy sounding in the sanctuary, and 'blessed are they that hear the joyful sound.' But if we turn the deaf ear to the voice of God and his Son, and to all the tender and compassionate intreaties of a dying Saviour, hope is hastening to its period; for this very angel will shortly swear, that this joyful sound shall be heard no longer.

He comes now to the door of our hearts, he sues there for admittance, 'Open unto me and receive me as your Saviour and your Lord, give me and my gospel free ad-

mission, and I will come in and bestow upon you the riches of my grace and all my salvation: Open your hearts to me with the holy desires and humble submission of penitence, and receive the blessings of righteousness, and pardon, and eternal life.' He now invites you to return to God with an acknowledgement and renunciation of every sin, and he offers to take you by the hand and introduce you into his Father's presence with comfort. This is a day of hope for the vilest and most hateful criminals; but if you continue to refuse, he will shortly swear in his wrath, that you shall never enter into his kingdom, you shall never taste of the provisions of his grace, you shall never be partakers of the blessings purchased with his blood, Heb. iii. 18. "I sware in my wrath," saith the Lord, "they shall not enter into my rest."

Oh the dreadful state of sinful creatures, who continue in such obstinacy, who waste away the means of grace and the seasons of hope, week after week, and month after month, till the day of grace and hope is for ever at an end with them! Hopeless creatures! Under the power and the plague of sin, under the wrath and curse of a God, under the eternal displeasure of Jesus who was once the minister of his Father's love; and they must abide under all this wretchedness through a long eternity, and in the land of everlasting despair. But I forbear that theme at present, and proceed.

5. At the moment of our death, 'the Time of our preparation for the hour of judgment, and for the insurance of heaven and happiness shall be no longer.' Miserable creatures that are summoned to die thus unprepared! This life is the only time to prepare for dying, to get ready to stand before the Judge of the whole earth, and to secure our title to the heavenly blessedness. Let my heart inquire, 'Have I ever seriously begun to prepare for a dying hour, and to appear before the Judge of all? Have I ever concerned myself in good earnest to secure an interest in the heavenly inheritance, when this earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved? Have I ever made interest for the favour of God and a share of the inheritance of the saints, by Jesus the great Mediator while he afforded life and time!' Death is daily and hourly hastening upon us: Death is the 'king of terrors,' and will fulfil all his name to every soul that is unprepared. It is a piece of wisdom

then for every one of us, since we must die, to search and feel whether death has lost its sting or no: whether it be taken away by the blood of Christ: Is this blood sprinkled on my conscience by the humble exercise of faith on a dying Saviour? Are the terrors of death removed, and am I prepared to meet it by the sanctifying influences of the blessed Spirit? Have I such an interest in the covenant of grace as takes away the sting of death, as turns the curse into a blessing, and changes the dark scene of death into the commencement of a new and everlasting life? This is that preparation for dying for which our time of life was given us; and happy are those who are taught of God to make this use of it.

Judgment is making haste towards us; months and days of divine patience are flying swift away, and the last great day is just at hand: Then we must give an account of "all that has been done in the body whether it has been good or evil:" And what a dismal and distressing surprise will it be to have the Judge come upon us in a blaze of glory and terror, while we have no good account to give at his demand? And yet this is the very end and design of all our time, which is lengthened out to us on this side the grave, and of all the advantages that we have enjoyed in this life, that we may be ready to render up our account with joy to the Judge of all the earth.

Heaven is not ours by birth and inheritance, as lands and houses on earth descend to us from our earthly parents. We, as well as they, are by nature unfit for heaven and children of wrath; but we may be born again, we may be born of God, and become heirs of the heavenly inheritance through Jesus Christ. We may be renewed into the temper and spirit of heaven; and this life is the only season that is given us for this important change. Shall we let our days and years pass away one after another in long succession, and continue the children of wrath still? Are we contented to go on this year as the last, without a title to heaven, without a divine temper, and without any preparation for the business or the blessedness of that happy world?

6. When this life comes to an end, 'the time of all our earthly comforts and amusements shall be no more.' We shall have none of these sensible things around us, to employ to entertain our eyes or our ears, to gratify our

appetites, to soothe our passions, or to support our spirits in distress. All the infinite variety of cares, labours and joys, which surround us here, shall be no more; life, with all the busy scenes and pleasing satisfactions of it dissolve and perish together. Have a care then that you do not make any of them your chief hope; for they are but the things of time; they are all short and dying enjoyments.

Under the various calamities of this life we find a variety of sensible reliefs, and our thoughts and souls are called away from their sorrows by present business, or diverted by present pleasures; but all these avocations and amusements will forsake us at once, when we drop this mortal tabernacle; we must enter alone into the world of spirits, and live without them there.

Whatsoever agonies or terrors, or huge distresses, we may meet with in that unknown region, we shall have none of these sensible enjoyments to soften and allay them, no drop of sweetness to mix with that bitter cup, no scenes of gaiety and merriment to relieve the gloom of that utter darkness, or to soothe the anguish of that eternal heart-ake. O take heed, my friends, that your souls do not live too much on any of the satisfactions of this life, that your affections be not set upon them in too high a degree, that you make them not your idols and your chief good, lest you be left helpless and miserable under everlasting disappointment, for they cannot follow you into the world of souls. They are the things of time, and they have no place in eternity. Read what caution the apostle Paul gives us in our converse with the dearest comforts of life; 1 Cor. vii. 29. "The time is short;" and let those who have the largest affluence of temporal blessings, who have the nearest and kindest relatives, and the most endeared friendships, be mortified to them, and be, in some sense, 'as though they had them not,' for ye cannot possess them long. St. Peter joins in the same sort of advice, 1 Pet. iv. 7. "The end of all things is at hand, therefore be ye sober," be ye moderate in every enjoyment on earth, and prepare to part with them all, when the angel pronounces that 'Time shall be no longer.' His sentence puts an effectual period to every joy in this life, and to every hope that is not eternal.

Thus we have taken a brief survey, what are the solemn

and awful thoughts relating to 'such mortal creatures in general,' which are contained in this voice or sentence of the angel, 'That Time shall be no longer.'

In the second place let us proceed further, and inquire a little 'what are those terrors which will attend sinners, impenitent sinners, at the end of time.'

1. A dreadful account must be given of all this lost and wasted time. When the Judge shall ascend his throne in the air, and all the sons and daughters of Adam are brought before him, the grand inquiry will be, 'What have you done with all the time of life in yonder world? You spent thirty or forty years there, or perhaps seventy or eighty, and I gave you this time with a thousand opportunities and means of grace and salvation; what have you done with them all? How many sabbaths did I afford you? How many sermons have ye heard? How many seasons did I give you for prayer and retirement, and converse with God and your own souls? Did you improve time well? Did you pray? Did you converse with your souls and with God? Or did you suffer time to slide away in a thousand impertinencies, and neglect the one thing necessary?'

2. 'A fruitless and bitter mourning for the waste and abuse of time' will be another consequence of your folly. Whatsoever satisfaction you may take now in passing time away merrily and without thinking, it must not pass away so for ever. If the approaches of death do not awaken you, yet judgment will do it. Your consciences will be worried with terrible reflections on your foolish conduct.

O could we but hear the complaints of the souls in hell, what multitudes of them would be found groaning out this dismal note, 'How hath my time been lost in vanity, and my soul is now lost for ever in distress: How might I have shone among the saints in heaven, had I wisely improved the time which was given me on earth, given me on purpose to prepare for death and heaven?' Then they will for ever curse themselves, and call themselves eternal fools, for hearkening to the temptations of flesh and sense, which wasted their time, and deprived them of eternal treasures.

3. Another of the terrors which will seize upon impenitent sinners at the end of time, will be 'endless despair of the recovery of lost time, and of those blessings whose hope is for ever lost with it.' There are blessings offered

to sinful miserable men in time, which will never be offered in eternity, nor put within their reach for ever. The gospel hath no calls, no invitations, no encouragements, no promises for the dead, who have lost and wasted their time, and are perished without hope. The region of sorrow, whither the Judge shall drive impenitent sinners, is a dark and desolate place, where light and hope can never come: But fruitless repentance, with horrors and agonies of soul, and doleful despair reign through that world, without one gleam of light or hope, or one moment of intermission. Then will despairing sinners gnaw their tongues for anguish of heart, and curse themselves with long execrations, and curse their fellow sinners, who assisted them to waste their time, and ruin their souls.

4. The last terror I shall mention which will attend sinners at the end of time, is an 'eternal suffering of all the painful and dismal consequences of lost and wasted time.' Not one smile from the face of God for ever, not one glimpse of love or mercy in his countenance, not one word of grace from Jesus Christ, who was once the chief messenger of the grace of God, not one favourable regard from all the holy saints and angels; but the fire and brimstone burn without end, "and the smoke of this their torment will ascend for ever and ever before the throne of God and the Lamb."

Who knows how keen and bitter will be the agonies of an awakened conscience, and the vengeance of a provoked God in that world of misery? How will you cry out, 'O what a wretch have I been to renounce all the advices of a compassionate father, when he would have persuaded me to improve the time of youth and health! Alas, I turned a deaf ear to his advice, and now time is lost, and my hopes of mercy for ever perished. How have I treated with ridicule among my vain companions the compassionate and pious counsels of my aged parents who laboured for my salvation? How have I scorned the tender admonitions of a mother, and wasted that time in sinning and sensuality which should have been spent in prayer and devotion?' And God turns a deaf ear to my cries now, and is regardless of all my groanings.' This sort of anguish of spirit with loud and cutting complaints would destroy life itself, and these inward terrors would sting their souls to death, if there could be any such thing

as dying there. Such sighs and sobs and bitter agonies would break their hearts, and dissolve their being, if the heart could break, or the being could be dissolved. But immortality is their dreadful portion, immortality of sorrows to punish their wicked and wilful abuse of time, and that waste of the means of grace they were guilty of in their mortal state.

I proceed in the last place to consider what reflections may be made on this discourse, or what are some of the profitable lessons to be learnt from it.

Reflect. 1. We may learn with great evidence 'the inestimable worth and value of time, and particularly to those who are not prepared for eternity.' Every hour you live is an hour longer given you to prepare for dying, and to save a soul. If you were but apprized of the worth of your own souls, you would better know the worth of days and hours, and of every passing moment, for they are given to secure your immortal interest, and save a soul from everlasting misery. And you would be zealous and importunate in the prayer of Moses, the man of God, upon a meditation of the shortness of life, Psal. xc. 12. "So teach us to number our days, as to apply our hearts to wisdom;" i. e. so teach us to consider how few and uncertain our days are, that we may be truly wise in preparing for the end of them.

It is a matter of vast importance to be ever ready for the end of time, ready to hear this awful sentence confirmed with the oath of the glorious angel, that 'Time shall be no longer.' The terrors or the comforts of a dying bed depend upon it: the solemn and decisive voice of judgment depends upon it: the joys and the sorrows of a long eternity depend upon it. Go now, careless sinner, and in the view of such things as these, go and trifle away time as you have done before; time, that invaluable treasure! Go and venture the loss of your souls, and the hopes of heaven and your eternal happiness, in wasting away the remnant hours or moments of life. But remember the awful voice of the angel is hastening towards you, and the sound is just breaking in upon you, that 'Time shall be no longer.'

Reflect. II. 'A due sense of time hastening to its period, will furnish us with perpetual new occasions of holy meditation

Do I observe the declining day and the setting sun sinking into darkness? so declines the day of life, the hours of labour, and the season of grace. O may I finish my appointed work with honour, before the light is fled! May I improve the shining hours of grace before the shadows of the evening overtake me, and my time of working is no more!

Do I see the moon gliding along through midnight, and fulfilling her stages in the dusky sky? This planet also is measuring out my life, and bringing the number of my months to their end. May I be prepared to take leave of the sun and moon, and bid adieu to these visible heavens and all the twinkling glories of them! These are all but the measurers of my time, and hasten me on towards eternity.

Am I walking in a garden, and stand still to observe the slow motion of the shadow upon a dial there? It passes over the hour lines with an imperceptible progress, yet it will touch the last line of day-light shortly: so my hours and my moments move onward with a silent pace; but they will arrive with certainty at the last limit, how heedless soever I am of their motion, and how thoughtless soever I may be of the improvement of time, or of the end of it.

Does a new year commence, and the first morning of it dawn upon me? Let me remember that the last year was finished, and has gone over my head, in order to make way for the entrance of the present. I have one year the less to travel through this world, and to fulfil the various services of a travelling state. May my diligence in duty be doubled, since the number of my appointed years is diminished.

Do I find a new birth-day in my survey of the kalendar, the day wherein I entered upon the stage of mortality, and was born into this world of sins, frailties and sorrows, in order to my probation for a better state? Blessed Lord, how much have I spent already of this mortal life, this season of my probation, and how little am I prepared for that happier world? How unready for my dying moment? I am hastening hourly to the end of the life of man, which began with my nativity; am I yet born of God? Have I begun the life of a saint? Am I prepared for that awful day which shall determine the number of my months on

earth? Am I fit to be born into the world of spirits through the strait gate of death? Am I renewed in all the powers of my nature, and made meet to enter into that unseen world, where there shall be no more of these revolutions of days and years; but one eternal day fills up all the space with divine pleasure, or one eternal night with long and deplorable distress and darkness?

When I see a friend expiring, or the corpse of my neighbour conveyed to the grave, alas! their months and minutes are all determined, and the seasons of their trial are finished for ever; they are gone to their eternal home, and the estate of their souls is fixed unchangeably. The angel that has sworn their 'time shall be no longer,' has concluded their hopes, or has finished their fears, and, according to the rules of righteous judgment, has decided their misery or happiness for a long immortality. Take this warning, O my soul, and think of thy own removal.

Are we standing in the church-yard, paying the last honours to the relics of our friends? What a number of hillocks of death appear all round us? What are the tomb-stones, but memorials of the inhabitants of that town, to inform us of the periods of all their lives, and to point out the day when it was said to each of them, 'your time shall be no longer.' O may I readily learn this important lesson, that my turn is hastening too; such a little hillock shall shortly arise for me in some unknown spot of ground, it shall cover this flesh and these bones of mine in darkness, and shall hide them from the light of the sun, and from the sight of man till the heavens be no more.

Perhaps some surviving friend may engrave my name with the number of my days, upon a plain funeral stone, without ornament and below envy. There shall my tomb stand among the rest as a fresh monument of the frailty of nature and the end of time. It is possible some friendly foot may now and then visit the place of my repose, and some tender eye may bedew the cold memorial with a tear. One or another of my old acquaintance may possibly attend there to learn the silent lecture of mortality from my grave stone, which my lips are now preaching aloud to the world. And if love and sorrow should reach so far, perhaps while his soul is melting in his eyelids, and his voice scarce finds an utterance, he will point with his finger, and shew his companion the month and the day of

my decease. O that solemn, that awful day, which shall finish my appointed time on earth, and put a full period to all the designs of my heart, and all the labours of my tongue and pen!

Think, O my soul, that while friends and strangers are engaged on that spot, and reading the date of thy departure hence, thou wilt be fixed under a decisive and unchangeable sentence, rejoicing in the rewards of time well-improved, or suffering the long sorrows which shall attend the abuse of it, in an unknown world of happiness or misery.

Reflect. III. We may learn from this discourse, the 'stupid folly and madness of those who are terribly afraid of the end of time, whensoever they think of it, and yet they know not what to do with their time as it runs off daily and hourly.' They find their souls unready for death, and yet they live from year to year without any further preparation for dying. They waste away their hours of leisure in mere trifling, they lose their seasons of grace, their means and opportunities of salvation, in a thoughtless and shameful manner, as though they had no business to employ them in; they live as though they had nothing to do with all their time but to eat and drink, and be easy and merry. From the rising to the setting sun you find them still in pursuit of impertinencies; they waste God's sacred time as well as their own, either in a lazy, indolent, and careless humour, or in following after vanity, sin and madness, while the end of time is hastening upon them.

What multitudes are there of the race of Adam, both in higher and lower ranks, who are ever complaining they want leisure, and when they have a release from business for one day, or one hour, they hardly know what to do with that idle day, or how to lay out one of the hours of it for any valuable purpose? Those in higher station and richer circumstances, have most of their time at their own command and disposal: but by their actual disposal of it, you plainly see they know not what it is good for, nor what use to make of it; they are quite at a loss how to get rid of this tedious thing called Time, which lies daily as a burden on their hands. Indeed if their head ake, or their face grow pale, and a physician feel their pulse, or look wishfully on their countenance; and, especially, if he should shake his head, or tell them his fears that they will not hold out long, what surprise of soul, what agonies and ter-

rors seize them on a sudden, for fear of the end of time? For they are conscious how unfit they are for eternity. Yet when the pain vanishes, and they feel health again, they are as much at a loss as ever what to do with the remnant of life.

O the painful and the unhappy ignorance of the sons and daughters of men, that are sent hither on a trial for eternity, and yet know not how to pass away time! they know not how to wear out life, and get soon enough to the end of the day. 'They doze their hours away, or saunter from place to place,' without any design or meaning. They enquire of every one they meet, what they shall do *to kill time* (as the French phrase is,) because they cannot spend it fast enough; they are perpetually calling in the assistance of others to laugh, or sport, or trifle with them, and to help them off with this dead weight of time, while, at the same moment, if you do but mention the end of time, they are dreadfully afraid of coming near it. What folly and distraction is this! What sottish inconsistency is found in the heart and practice of sinful men! Eccles. ix. 3. "The heart of the sons of men, is full of evil, madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go down to the dead."

O that these loiterers would once consider that time loiters not; days and hours, months and years, loiter not; each of them flies away with swiftest wing, as fast as succession admits of, and bears them onward, to the goal of eternity. If they delay and linger among toys and shadows, time knows no delay; and they will one day learn by bitter experience what substantial, important, and eternal blessings they have lost by their criminal and shameful waste of time. The apostle Peter assures them, 2 Pet. ii. 3, though they slumber and sleep in a lethargy of sin, so that you cannot awaken them, yet 'their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.' The awful moment is hasting upon them which shall teach them terribly the true value of time. Then they would give all the golden pleasures, and the riches and the grandeur of this world, to purchase one short day more, or one hour of time, wherein they might repent and return to God, and get within the reach of hope and salvation. But time and salvation and hope are all vanished, and fled, and gone out of their reach for ever.

Reflect. IV. Learn from such meditations as these, 'the rich mercy of God, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in giving us so long a warning, before he swears *that time shall be no more.*' Every stroke of sickness is a warning-piece that life is coming to its period: every death amongst our friends and acquaintance, is another tender and painful admonition that our death also is at hand. The end of every week and every dawning Sabbath is another warning; every sermon we hear of the 'shortness of time,' and the 'uncertainty of life,' is a fresh intimation that the great angel will shortly pronounce a period upon all our time. How inexcusable shall we be if we turn the deaf ear to all these warnings? St. Peter advises us to "count the long-suffering of the Lord for salvation," 2 Pet. iii. 15; and to secure our eternal safety, and our escape from hell, during the season of his lengthened grace.

Alas! how long has Jesus, and his mercy, and his gospel, waited on you, before you began to think of the things of your everlasting peace? And if you are now solemnly awakened, yet how long has he waited on you with fresh admonitions, and with special providences, with mercies and judgments, with promises and invitations of grace, with threatenings and words of terror, and with the whispers and advices of his own Spirit, since you began to see your danger? And after all, have you yet sincerely repented of sin? Have you yet received the offered grace? Have you given up yourselves to the Lord and laid hold of his salvation? 2 Cor. vi. 2. "This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation; To-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts." Heb. iii. 7, 8, &c. It is never said through all the Bible, that 'to-morrow is the day of grace;' or 'tomorrow is the time of acceptance.' It is the present hour only that is offered. Every day and every hour is a mercy of unknown importance to sinful men. It is a mercy, O sinners, that you awaked not this morning in hell, and that you were not fixed without remedy beyond the reach of hope and mercy.

Reflect. V. Learn from this discourse what 'a very useful practice it would be to set ourselves often before hand as at the end of time;' to imagine ourselves just under the sound of the voice of this mighty angel, or at the tribunal of Christ, and to call our souls to a solemn account in what manner we have past away all our leisure time hitherto: I mean, all that time which hath not been laid out in the

necessities of the natural life, for its support and its needful refreshment, or in the due and proper employments of the civil life: both these are allowed and required by the God of nature and the God of providence who governs the world. But what hast thou done, O man, O woman, what hast thou done with all the hours of leisure which might have been laid out on far better employments, and to far nobler purposes? Give me leave to enter into particulars a little, for generals do but seldom convince the mind, or awaken the conscience, or affect the heart.

1. Have you not 'slumbered or squandered' away too much time 'without any useful purpose or design' at all? How many are there, that when they have morning hours on their hands, can pass them off on their beds, and lose and forget time in 'a little more sleep and a little more slumber;' a few impertinences, with breakfast and dressing, wear out the morning without God. And how many afternoon and evening hours are worn away in such sauntering idleness as I have described, that when the night comes they cannot review one half hour's useful work, from the dawn of morning to the hour of rest. Time is gone and vanished, and as they knew not what to do with it while it was present, so now it is past, they know not what they have done with it: they keep no account of it, and are never prepared to come to a reckoning. But will the great Judge of all take this for answer to such a solemn inquiry?

2. Have you never laid out much more time than was needful in 'recreations and pleasures of sense?' Recreations are not unlawful, so far as they are necessary and proper to relieve the fatigue of the spirits, and when they are tired with business or labour, and to prepare for new labours and new business; but have we not followed sports without measure and without due limitation? Hath not some of that very time been spent in them which should have been laid out in preparing for death and eternity, and in seeking things of far higher importance?

3. Have you not wasted too much time in your *frequent clubs*, and what you call *good company*, and in 'places of public resort?' Hath not the tavern, or the coffee-house, or the ale-house, seen and known you from hour to hour for a whole evening, and that sometimes before the trade or labours of the day should have been ended? And when your Bible and your closet, or the devotion of your family,

have sometimes called upon your conscience, have you not turned the deaf ear to them all?

4. Have not 'useless and impertinent visits' been made to no good purpose, or been prolonged beyond all necessity or improvement? When your conversation runs low even to the dregs, and both you and your friends have been at a loss what to say next, and knew not how to fill up the time, yet the visit must go on, and time must be wasted. Sometimes the wind and the weather, and twenty insignificancies, or (what is much worse) scandal of persons or families, have come in to your relief, that there might not be too long a silence; but not one word of God or goodness could find room to enter in and relieve the dull hour. Is none of this time ever to be accounted for? And will it sound well in the ears of the great Judge, 'We ran to these sorry topics, these slanderous and backbiting stories, because we could not tell what to talk of, and we knew not how to spend our time.'

5. Have you not been guilty of 'frequent and even perpetual delays or neglects of your proper necessary business in the civil life, or in the solemn duties of religion, by busying yourselves in some other needless thing under this pretence, *it is time enough yet?*'

Have you learnt that important and eternal rule of prudence, 'never delay till to-morrow what may be done today; never put off till the next hour what may be done in this?' Have you not often experienced your own disappointment and folly by these delays? And yet have you ever so repented as to learn to mend them? Solomon tells us, Eccles. iii. 1. "There is a time for every purpose, and every work, under the sun:" a proper and agreeable time for every lawful work of nature and life; and it is the business and care of a wise man to 'do proper work in proper time;' but when we have let slip the proper season, how often have we been utterly disappointed? Have we not sustained great inconveniencies? And sometimes it hath so happened that we could never do that work or business at all, because another proper season for it hath never offered? Time hath been no more. Felix put off his discourse with Paul about the "faith of Christ, and righteousness, and judgment to come, to a more convenient time," which probably never came, Acts xxiv. 25. And the word of God teaches us, that if we neglect our salvation in the

present day of grace, the angel in my text is ready to swear, that 'Time shall be no longer.'

Here permit me to put in a short word to those who have lost much time already.

O my friends, begin now to do what in you lies to regain it, by double diligence in the matters of your salvation, lest the 'voice of the arch-angel' should finish your time of trial, and call you to judgment before you are prepared.

What time lies before you for this double improvement, God only knows. The remnant of the measure of your days are with him, and every evening the number is diminished. Let not the rising sun upbraid you with continued negligence. Remember your former abuses of hours, and months, and years, in folly and sin, or at best in vanity and trifling. Let these thoughts of your past conduct lie with such an effectual weight on your hearts, as to keep you ever vigorous in present duty. Since you have been so lazy and loitering in your Christian race in time past, take larger steps daily, and stretch all the powers of your souls to hasten towards the crown and the prize. Hearken to the voice of God in his word, with stronger attention and zeal to profit. Pray to a long-suffering God with double fervency; cry aloud and give him no rest till your sinful soul is changed into penitence, and renewed to holiness, till you have some good evidences of your sincere love to God, and unfeigned faith in his son Jesus. Never be satisfied till you are come to a well-grounded hope through grace, that God is your friend, your reconciled Father; that when days and months are no more, you may enter into the region of everlasting light and peace.

But I proceed to the last general remark. 'Learn the unspeakable happiness of those who have improved time well, and who wait for the end of time with Christian hope.' They are not afraid, or at least they need not be afraid of the sentence, nor the oath of this mighty angel, when he lifts up his hand to heaven, and swears with a loud voice, 'There shall be time no more.'

O blessed creatures, who have so happily improved the time of life and day of grace, as to obtain the restoration of the image of God, in some degree, on their souls, and to recover the favour of God through the gospel of Christ, for which end time was bestowed upon them! They have reviewed their follies with shame in the land of hope; they

have mourned and repented of sin, ere the season of repentance was past, and are become new creatures, and their lips and their lives declare the divine change. They have made preparation for death, for which purpose life and time were given. Happy souls indeed, who have so valued time as not to let it run off in trifles, but have obtained treasures more valuable than that time which is gone, even the riches of the covenant of grace, and the hopes of an eternal inheritance in glory.

Happy such souls indeed when time is no more with them! Their happiness begins when the duration of their mortal life is finished. Let us survey this their happiness in a few particulars.

The time of their 'darkness and difficulties' is no longer: the time of painful ignorance and error is come to an end. You shall wander no more in mistake and folly: you shall behold all things in the light of God, and see him face to face, who is the original beauty and the eternal truth. You shall see him without vails and shadows, without the reflecting glass of his word and ordinances, which at best give us but a faint glimpse of him, either in his nature or wisdom, his power or goodness. You shall see him in himself and in his son Jesus, the brightest and fairest image of the Father, and 'shall know him as you are known,' 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 12.

There is no more time for 'temptation and danger:' when once you are got beyond the limits of this visible world, and all the enticing objects of flesh and sense, there shall be no more hazard of your salvation, no more doubting and distressing fears about your interest in your Father's love, or in the salvation of his beloved Son.

There is no more place nor time for 'sin to inhabit in you:' the lease of its habitation in your mortal body must end, when the body itself falls into the dust: you shall feel no more of its powerful and defiling operations either in heart or life for ever.

The time of 'conflict with your spiritual adversaries is no longer.' There is no more warfare betwixt the flesh and spirit, no more combat with the world and the devil, who, by a thousand ways have attempted to deceive you, and to bear you off from your heavenly hope. Your warfare is accomplished, your victory is complete, you are made overcomers through him that has loved you. Death is the last

enemy to be overcome; the sting of it is already taken away, and you have now finished the conquest, and are assured of the crown, 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.

The time of your 'distance and absence from God is no more: the time of coldness and indifference, and the fearful danger of backslidings, is no more. You shall be made as 'pillars in the temple of your God, and shall go no more out.' He shall love you like a God, and kindle the flames of your love to so intense a degree, as is only known to angels, and to the spirits of the just made perfect.

There is no more time for you to be vexed with the 'society of sinful creatures.' Your spirit within you shall be no more ruffled and disquieted with the teazing conversation of the wicked, nor shall you be interrupted in your holy and heavenly exercises by any of the enemies of God and his grace.

The time of your 'painful labours and sufferings is no more.' Rev. xiv. 13, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from all their labours" that carry toil or fatigue with them. 'There shall be no more' complaints nor groans, 'no sorrow or crying;' the springs of grief are for ever dried up, 'neither shall there be any more pain' in the flesh or the spirit. "God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes, and death shall be no more." Rev. xxi. 4.

"It is finished," said our blessed Lord on the cross: 'It is finished,' may every one of his followers say at the hour of death, and at the end of time. My sins and follies, my distresses and my sufferings, are finished for ever, and the mighty angel swears to it, that the *time* of those evils is *no longer:* they are vanished, and shall never return. O happy souls, who have been so wise to count the short and uncertain number of your days on earth, as to make an early provision for a removal to heaven. Blest are you above all the powers of present thought and language. Days, and months, and years, and all these short and painful periods of time, shall be swallowed up in a long and blissful eternity; the stream of time which has run between the banks of this mortal life, and borne you along amidst many dangerous rocks of temptation, fear and sorrow, shall launch you out into the ocean of pleasures which have no period. Those felicities must be everlasting, for duration has no limit there, *Time,* with all its measures, *shall be no more.* Amen.

DISCOURSE II.

THE WATCHFUL CHRISTIAN DYING IN PEACE.

OCCASIONED BY THE DECEASE OF MISS SARAH ABNEY, DAUGHTER OF THE LATE SIR THOMAS ABNEY, KNT. &c. PREACHED APRIL 2, 1732.

Dedicated to the Lady ABNEY, mother of the deceased, and to Miss MARY and Miss ELIZABETH ABNEY, her two surviving sisters.

MADAM,

IF sorrows could be diminished in proportion to the multitude of those who share in them, the spring of your tears would have been drawn almost dry, and the tide of grief have sunk low, by being divided into a thousand streams. But though this cannot afford perfect relief to your Ladyship, yet it must be some consolation to have been blessed with a daughter, whose removal from our world could give occasion for so general a mourning.

I confess, Madam, the wound which was made by such a smarting stroke is not to be healed in a day or two; reason permits some risings of the softer and kinder passions in such a season; it shews at least that our hearts are not marble, and reveals the tender ingredients that are moulded up in our frame; nor does religion permit us to be insensible when a God afflicts, though he doth it with the hand of a father and a friend. Nature and love are full of these sensibilities, and incline you to miss her presence in every place where she was wont to attend you, and where you rejoiced in her as one of your dearest blessings. She is taken away indeed from mortal sight, and to follow her remains to the grave, and to dwell there, gives but a dark and melancholy view, till the great rising-day. Faith may ken the distant prospect, and exult in the sight of that glorious futurity; yet I think there is also a nearer relief, Madam, to your sorrows. By the virtues which shone in her life, you may trace the ascent of her spirit to the world of immortality and joy. Could your Ladyship keep the eye of your soul directed thither, you would find it an effectual balm for a heart that bleeds at the painful remembrance of her death. What could your Ladyship have asked as a higher favour of heaven, than to have born and trained up a child for that glorious inheritance, and to have her secured of the possession beyond all possible fear or danger of losing it.

This, Madam, is your own divinest hope for yourself, and you are hastening on toward that blessed society as fast as days and hours give leave. When your thoughts descend to this lower world again, there are two living comforts near you of the same kind with what you have lost. May your Ladyship rejoice in them yet many years, and they in you! And when Jesus, who hath the keys of death and the invisible state, shall appoint the hour for your ascent to heaven, may you leave them behind to bless the world with fair examples of virtue and piety among men, and a long train of services for the interest of their Redeemer.

If I were to say any thing, young Ladies, to you in particular, it should be in the language of our Saviour, and his beloved apostle; "Hold fast what you have till the Lord comes, that none may *deprive you* of your crown. Take heed to yourselves, that you lose not the things which you have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward." Go on and persevere as you have begun, in the path of true religion and happiness: and in this age of infidelity and degenerate life, be ye daily more established in the Christian faith and practice, in opposition to the smiles and frowns, and every snare of a vain delusive world. Let this one thought set a double guard upon you, that while your elder sister was with you, it was something easier to resist every temptation, when she had pronounced the first refusal: Her steadiness was a guard which you have now lost, but you have an Almighty God in covenant on your side, and the "grace of our Lord Jesus is sufficient for you."

To his care, My Lady, I commend yourself, and your whole family, with affectionate petitions; and am,

MADAM,
Your Ladyship's most obliged
and faithful Servant,
I. WATTS.

London, April 28, 1732.

A FUNERAL SERMON.

It is an awful providence which hath lately removed from among us a young person well known to most of you, whose agreeable temper and conduct had gained the esteem of all her acquaintance, whose constitution of body, together with the furniture of her mind, and circumstances in the world, concurred to promise many future years of life and usefulness. But all that is born of the race of man is frail and mortal, and all that is done by the hand of God is wise and holy. We mourn, and we submit in silence. Yet the providence hath a voice in it, and the friends of the deceased are very solicitous that such an unexpected and instructive appearance of death might be religiously improved to the benefit of the living. For this end I am desired to entertain you at present with some meditations on those words of our Saviour, which you read in

Luke xii. 37.

Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.

Various and well chosen are those parables whereby our Saviour gave warning to his disciples, that when he was departed from this world they should ever be upon their guard, and always in a readiness to receive him at his return: because he would come on a sudden, and "in such an hour as they thought not," to demand an account of their behaviour, and to distribute his recompences according to their works. There are two of these parables in this chapter. But to enter into a detail of all the particular metaphors which relate to this one, whence I have borrowed my text, would be too tedious here, and would spend too much of the present hour. Without any longer preface therefore, I shall apply myself to improve the words to our spiritual profit in the following method.

I. I shall enquire what is meant by the 'coming of Christ' in the text, and how it may be properly applied to our present purpose, or the 'hour of death.'

II. I shall consider what is implied in the *watchfulness* which our Saviour recommends.

III. I propose some considerations which will discover the 'blessedness of the watchful soul' in a dying hour.

IV. I shall add some *practical remarks.*

First, Let us enquire what is meant by the 'coming of Christ,' in my text.

The 'coming of Christ,' in some of these parables, may have reference to his speedy appearance in the course of his providence in that very age, to judge and punish the Jewish nation, to destroy their city, and put an end to their church and state, for their many heinous iniquities, and the most provoking crime of rejecting and crucifying the Son of God. But these words, in their supreme and most important sense, always point to the 'glorious appearance of Christ at the last day,' when he shall come to shut up all the scenes of this frail life, to put an end to the present world, to finish all the works of this mortal state, and to decide and determine the eternal states of all mankind by the general judgment.

Yet 'Christ comes' to each of us in 'the hour of death' also, for 'he hath the keys of death and of hell,' or of the invisible world, Rev. i. 18. It is he who appoints the very moment when the soul shall be dismissed from this flesh; he opens the doors of the grave for the dying body; and he is Lord of the world of spirits, and lets in new inhabitants every minute into those unseen regions of immortal sorrow, or immortal peace.

And as Christ may be said to 'come to us' by the message or 'summons of death,' so the many solemn writings and commands of *watchfulness,* which attend these parables of Christ, have been usually, and with good reason, applied to the 'hour of death' also, for then the Lord comes 'to shut up the scene of' each of our *lives,* our 'works are then finished,' our 'last day is come,' and the 'world is then at an end' with us.

Let it be observed also, that there is a further parallel between the day of the 'general judgment,' and that of

'our own death.' The one will as certainly come as the other; but the time when Christ will come in either of these senses, is unknown to us and uncertain: and it is this, which renders the duty of perpetual watchfulness so necessary to all men. The parable assures us, that our Lord will certainly come; but whether at the 'second or third watch,' whether 'at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or near the morning,' this is all uncertainty; yet whensoever he comes, he expects we should 'have our loins girded,' like servants fit for business, 'and our lamps burning,' to attend him at the door, and that we 'be ready to receive him as soon as he knocks.' *

* It may not be unacceptable to the reader, to find here an account of the manner in which the marriage procession was conducted anciently among the Jews, as it will help to illustrate and explain the allusions, which our Lord employs in the context, and in other passages. "After the connubial union was solemnly ratified and attested, and the religious part of it concluded, it was customary for the bridegroom, in the evening, to conduct his spouse from her friends to his own house, with all the pomp, brilliancy and joy, that could be crowded into the procession. It was usual for the bridegroom, to invite his young female friends and relations to grace this procession, and to add numbers and lustre to his retinue: these, adorned in robes suitable to the occasion, took lamps, and waited in a company near the house, till the bride and bridegroom with their friends issued forth, whom they welcomed with the customary congratulations, then joined in the train, and with songs and acclamations and every demonstration of joy, advanced to the bridegroom's house, where an entertainment was provided, according to the circumstances of the united pair. The nuptial feast was adorned and celebrated only by a select company of the bride and bridegroom's friends; no strangers were admitted; by these the evening was spent in all the convivial enjoyment, which social happiness, their approbation of the [recent] union, and the splendor of such a festivity could inspire." [These circumstances are finely alluded to in the parable of the ten virgins, Mat. xxv. Five of these inconsiderately took lamps, but neglected the oil. As the return of the bridegroom was always at night, and the precise time of his approach uncertain, these virgins, after waiting long, and becoming fatigued with tedious expectation, fell asleep.] "But lo! at midnight, they were suddenly alarmed with a cry, "The bridegroom! the bridegroom is coming! Hasten to meet and congratulate him." Roused with this unexpected proclamation they all rose up and trimmed their lamps. The thoughtless then began to solicit the others to impart to them some of their oil, telling them that their lamps were entirely extinguished. To these entreaties the prudent [virgins] answered, that they had only provided a sufficient quantity for their own use, and therefore advised them to go and purchase oil of those who sold it. They departed accordingly; but during their absence the bridegroom came, and the prudent virgins, being prepared for his reception, went along with him to the entertainment. The doors were then immediately shut. After some time the others came to the door, and supplicated earnestly for admission. But the bridegroom repulsed them, telling

Were the appointed hour of judgment, or of death, made known to us for months or years before-hand, we should be ready to think *constant watchfulness*, a very needless thing. Mankind would persuade themselves to indulge their foolish and sinful slumbers, and only take care to rub their eyes a little, and bestir themselves an hour or two before this awful event. But it is the suddenness and uncertainty of the coming of Christ to all mankind, for either of these purposes, that extends the charge of watchfulness to all men as well as to the Apostles, Mark. xiii. 37, and that calls upon us aloud to keep our souls ever awake, 'lest (as our Lord there expresses it,) coming suddenly, he should find us sleeping.' And remember this, that if we are unprepared to meet the Lord at death, we can never be ready when he comes to judgment; peace and blessedness attend the watchful Christian, whensoever his Lord cometh. "Blessed is that servant, whom, when his Lord comes, he shall find watching." This leads me to the second general head.

Secondly, What is implied in *watchfulness?*

In general, it is opposed to *sleeping*, as I have already hinted, in Mark xiii. 35, 36. And in the language of Scripture, as well as in common speech, *sleep* and *slumbering*, denote an unpreparedness to receive whatever comes, for this is the case with those who are asleep. On the other hand, *watchfulness* is a preparation and readiness for every event, and so it is expressed in some of these parables; ver. 40, "Be ye therefore ready." But to enter into a few particulars.

1. There is a "sleep of death," Psal. xiii. 3. Spiritual death as well as natural, is sometimes called *a sleep*. Such is the case of a soul "dead in trespasses and sins," Eph.

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them he did not know them, and would not admit any strangers." *Horne's Introduction*, vol. iii. p. 409. As no admittance was granted after the shutting of the door, it is plain, that careless friends, who, through unwatchfulness, might suffer surprise, and not be prepared to join the procession, in time to enter in with the bridegroom, would also be excluded. If the servants, whose business it was to prepare every thing for the reception of their master and his friends, should have been found asleep, negligent, and unprepared, when his knock at the door admonished them of his arrival, it is evident, that they would have been liable to punishment. If we, as unfaithful servants, be found, when our Lord, in the night of death, shall knock at the door of our earthly tabernacle, unprepared to meet him, what imagination can anticipate the anguish of our doom?—Ed.

v. 14. compared with ii. 1 : Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

Watchfulness therefore implies *life*, a principle of spiritual life in the soul. Surely those who are dead in sins are not prepared to receive their Lord. He is a perfect stranger to them, they know him not, they love him not, they obey him not ; and a terrible stranger he will be, if he comes upon them before they are awake. But those who are awakened by divine grace into a spiritual life, have seen something of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ;" they are acquainted with their Lord, they love him, and have some degree of preparation to meet their Saviour when he summons them to leave this world. This is therefore a matter of highest consequence, that we awake from a state of sin and death, that we be made alive to God, begin the Christian life, and set upon religion in good earnest, according to the rules of the gospel, before Christ call us away. It is only this divine life begun in us, that can secure us from eternal death ; though even Christians may be found slumbering in other respects, and expose themselves to painful evils, if that hour surprise them at unawares.

2. There is 'a sleep of indolence and thoughtlessness.' When a man is insensible of his own circumstances, and too careless of the things which most concern him, we say, 'the man is asleep.' Such a sleep seems to be upon the church of Israel, Isa. xxix. 10, "a spirit of deep sleep," when the law which contained the great things of God, and their salvation, was to them 'as a sealed book,' they read it not, their eyes were closed, their spiritual senses were bound up. Many a Christian who hath been raised from a death in sin, has been seized with this criminal slumber, and has had the image of death come again upon him. He has grown too careless and unconcerned about his most important and eternal affairs ; and in this temper he hardly knows what his state is toward God, nor keeps up a lively sense or notice of divine and eternal things upon his spirit.

Watchfulness in opposition to this *sleep*, implies a holy solicitude and diligence, to know our own spiritual state; a consciousness of what we are; a keeping all the spiritual senses in proper exercise, and maintaining a lively perception of divine things. It implies an acute, pain-

ful sense of indwelling sin, and the irregular propensities of the heart, a delightful relish of heavenly objects, frequent thoughts of death and eternity, constant waiting for those awful events, with a quick apprehension and resentment of all things, that help or hinder the spiritual life. This is the character of a wakeful Christian, and such a one as is ready to receive his returning Lord.

3. There is a 'sleep of security and foolish peace,' when a person is not apprehensive of imminent danger, and is much unguarded against it. Such was the sleep of Jonah in the storm, of Sampson on the lap of Delilah, when the Philistines were upon him, and of the disciples when Judas and the band of soldiers were just ready to seize their Master. This is the case of many a slumbering Christian; he is not upon his guard against his inward lusts and passions, nor against those outward temptations and perils to which he is continually exposed, while he dwells in flesh and blood.

Watchfulness in this respect is, when a Christian hath his eyes open, and turns them round on every side to foresee approaching evil, and prevent it; when he is prepared for every assault of every adversary, whether sin or the world, whether death or the devil; he hath his spiritual armour girt upon him, and is ready for the combat. He is every hour guarded against the powers of the flesh, and watching against its allurements and attractions, lest he be defiled thereby, and unfit to meet his returning Lord.—He is daily loosening his heart from all sensual attachments, and weaning himself from the world and creatures, because he knows he must quickly take his long farewell, and part with them all, at the call and appointment of his great Master. He is like a sentinel upon his watch-tower, ever awake, because dangers stand thick around him.

4. There is a 'sleep of sloth and inactivity,' Prov. xix. 15: "Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep." 'A little more sleep, a little more slumber,' saith the lazy Christian, who 'turns upon his bed, as the door upon its hinges,' and makes no progress or advance in his way to heaven. We are sleepy Christians when we do little for God, or our own souls, in comparison of the vast work, and important varieties of duty that lie upon us: when our zeal is cold, and our efforts of service slight and feeble: when the light of grace shines so dim, and the spark of holiness is so co-

vered with ashes, that it is hard to say whether it burn or no. As in natural things, so in spiritual, it is a difficult matter sometimes to distinguish between a dead man, and a lethargic sleeper.

Watchfulness in opposition to this slumber, is a lively and vigorous exercise of every grace, and a diligent attendance on every duty, both toward God and man, a constant converse with heaven by daily devotion, an active zeal for God in the world, a steady faith in the promises, a joyful hope of heavenly blessedness, a longing expectation of the returning Saviour, which makes the soul stretch out the wings of desire and joy, as though it were going forth to meet him. This is the meaning of the Apostle Peter's expression, 2 Pet. iii. 12, "Looking for, and hastening to the coming of the day of God."

Put all these things together now, and they make up the character of a 'watchful Christian.' He is awake from the sleep of death, and made spiritually alive; he hath the work of vital religion begun in his heart.

He is awake from the sleep of 'thoughtlessness and indolence;' he is solicitous to know his own state, and hath good hope through grace; he lives in the view of heavenly things, and keeps his eye open to future and eternal glories.

He is awake from the sleep of *security*, he is upon his guard against every danger, and ready to receive every alarm.

He is awake from the sleep of *slothfulness*, and is active in the pursuit of the glory of his God, and his own eternal interest, and still 'pressing toward the mark to obtain the prize.' This is the soul that is ready to meet a returning Saviour, and to receive his Lord when he comes, either at the hour of death, or to the general judgment.

Thirdly, Let me propose some special considerations which discover 'the blessedness of the watchful Christian at the hour of death.'

1. *Consid.* That moment dispossesses us of every enjoyment of flesh and blood, and divides us from the commerce of this visible world; but 'the wakeful Christian is happy, for he is ready to be thus divided and dispossessed.' Death breaks the band at once between us, and all the sensible things round about us, by dissolving the frame of this body, which had united us to them; and the

watchful saint is content to have that bond broken, these unions dissolved. His heart and soul are not torn away from the dear delights of this mortal state with that pain, anguish and horror, that attends the sinner when death summons him off the stage, and divides him from his fleshly idols. The Christian hath been untying his heart by degrees, from the dearest delights of sense, and disengaging it from all that is not immortal. With holy pleasure he can bid farewell to sun, moon, and stars, and to all things which their light can shew him, for he is going to a world where the Sun of righteousness ever shines in unclouded glory, and discovers such sights, as are infinitely superior to all that the eyes of flesh can behold; he can part with friends and kindred with a composed spirit, for he is going to meet better friends and diviner kindred, as we shall shew immediately. He can leave his dying flesh behind him, and commit it to the dust, in joyful hope of the great rising-day, and he hath a better mansion at present provided for him on high in his Father's house, while he lives far separate from all earthly dwellings, 2 Cor. v. 1. "We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

2. *Consid.* The moment of death finishes our state of trial, and fixes us unchangeably in the state of sin or holiness, in which we are then found; and blessed is the watchful Christian, for he is prepared to have his trial thus ended, and his state thus fixed and made unchangeable.'— "As the tree falls, so it lies," Eccles. xi. 10, "whether to the north, or the south." As the soul parts from the body, so it remains, whether fitted for heaven or hell. It is therefore a matter of the last importance to be prepared and ready for such an eternal sentence, and unchangeable determination. Were any of us to be surprised some moment this day, and forced to continue all our lives, in that very posture of body, in which we are then found; should we not be awake, and keep ourselves in the most natural and easy gestures all that day, lest we be seized at once, and fixed in some distorted, painful, and uneasy situation, all our months and years to come? Or if we were to be bound down to one single thought, or passion, all the remnant of our life, in which we were found in any uncertain minute in this hour; should we not watch with the ut-

most care, and guard against every unpleasing thought, and every fretful and vexing passion, lest it should be fixed upon us till we die?

Now this is the case at death. The almighty voice of God then pronounces, "he that is unclean and unholy must for ever be unholy and unclean; but he that is righteous let him be righteous still, and he that is holy shall be for ever holy," Rev. xxii. 11. I will not precisely determine that this is the sense of that text; yet since the Apostle speaks there concerning the coming of Christ, it may be very applicable to the present case. Now, how dreadful soever this thought is to a guilty sinful creature, it is no terror to a wakeful Christian. He is ready to have these words pronounced from heaven; for they will establish him in eternal holiness and eternal peace. He hath endeavoured to secure to himself an interest in the love of God, through the faith and love of Jesus the blessed Mediator, and at death he is fixed for ever in that love. He hath loved God in time, and in this visible world, and there is nothing in all the unseen worlds, nothing through all the ages of eternity, that shall ever separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus. The moment of death hath fixed him for ever a holy and beloved soul, beyond the power of creatures to change his temper, or his state. This is the blessedness of the watchful Christian.

3. *Consid.* Death sets us in a more immediate and sensible manner in the presence of God, a glorious and holy God, God the Judge of all; and "blessed is the watchful Christian, for he is willing to stand before this God, to be brought into his presence. This is what he hath longed and prayed for, to be for ever with God. It is the blessedness that he hath sought with incessant labours and tears, with holy diligence, and daily devotion; and blessed is the "pure in heart," who hath watched against the pollutions of the world, "for he shall see God," Math. v. 8.

It is certain, that when the soul departs from the body, "it returns to God who gave it," Eccles. xii. 7. And probably to God as a Judge too, Heb. ix. 27: "After death judgment." There is some sort of determination of the state of each single person at death, before the great and general judgment-day; because that day is appointed rather for the public vindication of the equity of God in his distribution of rewards and punishments, and is par-

ticularly put into the hands of our Lord Jesus. Now, since the separate soul returns to God who gave it, it is of vast importance that we be then prepared to come before him.

Some of us here would be mightily afraid of appearing before a prince, or a great and honorable person, in an undress; but for our souls in a naked state, or in a garment of sinful pollution, to be surprised by the great and holy God, to be set on a sudden in his presence, what terror is contained in this thought! Now the 'watchful Christian hath this blessedness,' that he is washed from his defilements in the blood of the Lamb, "he is clothed with the robe of righteousness, and the garments of salvation," Isa. lxi. 10. He is prepared to appear before a God of infinite holiness without terror, for he is made like him, he bears his image, he appears as one of his children, and he is not afraid to see his Father.

However some commentators may confine and impoverish the sense of David in the end of the seventeenth Psalm, yet I am persuaded the Spirit of God in him designed to express his faith and joy, either at the hour of death, or in the morning of the resurrection; "I shall behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." When the Psalmist had described what were the satisfactions of the men of this world in death, ver. 14, viz. that they had filled their houses with children, and leave their substance or riches to them, he then declares, what was his support and hope in his dying hour, As for me, saith he, I have other views: I am not afraid, O my God, to appear before thee in the other world, for I shall see thy face, not as a criminal, but as a person approved and accepted, and righteous in thy sight; I shall awake from this world of dreams and shadows into thy complete image and perfect holiness; or, I shall awake from the dust of death, and shall be fully satisfied; and rejoice to find myself made so like my God, and to dwell for ever in his presence.

4. *Consid.* It is the Lord Jesus Christ that lets the soul out of the body, for he 'hath the keys of death, and of the unseen world,' and 'blessed is the watchful Christian, who waits for the coming of his Lord, for he can meet him gladly, when fulfilling this part of his glorious office.' He shall be introduced by him into the presence of God his Father,

and shall receive most condescending instances of mercy from Christ himself. See the text, Luke xii. 36, 37, "Be ye yourselves like men that wait for the Lord, that when he cometh and knocketh, ye may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily, I say to you, he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them." He shall condescend, as it were, even below the office of a steward, he shall bring out the heavenly provisions of his Father's house, and make them sit down in his kingdom, and give them divine refreshments after their labours; he shall 'feed them' as a shepherd, shall 'lead them to living fountains of waters,' and afford them his presence for ever.

The watchful Christian is blessed indeed, when he shall be 'absent from the body, and be at once present with the Lord,' 2 Cor. v. 8. The Lord Jesus whom he hath seen by faith in his gospel, whose voice he hath heard in his word, and obeyed it; Jesus, whom he hath touched and tasted in the appointed emblems of his supper on earth, in whom he hath believed through the word of grace, and whom he hath loved before he saw him, shall now receive him into his presence, and the disciple shall rejoice for ever to meet his Lord, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

5. *Consid.* At the hour of death we are sent at once into an invisible world; we shall find ourselves in the midst of holy or of unclean spirits; borne away at once into an unknown region, and into the midst of unknown inhabitants, the nations of the saved, or the crowds of damned souls; 'and blessed is the watchful Christian, for he is ready to enter into the unseen regions:' He knows he shall not be placed among those whose company and whose character he never loved here on earth; 'his soul shall not be gathered with sinners,' nor his dwelling be 'with the workers of iniquity,' but with the 'saints, the excellent in the earth, in whom was all his delight.' Every one when dismissed from the prison of this body, must go as the Apostles did, when released from the prison at Jerusalem, 'must go to their own company,' Acts iv. 23. Judas the traitor 'went to his own place,' Acts i. 25. And the watchful Christian will be disposed among 'spirits of the just made perfect;' he will find himself in that blessed so-

ciety, at his dismission from flesh and blood. Read and see what a glorious society it is, Heb. xii. 22, 23, "To the innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." The Apostle says, 'we are come to them' already, that is, by the covenant of grace, as administered under the gospel; we are brought into a blessed union with them, in spirit, and in temper, even in this life; we are members of the same body, we are united to the same head, and made parts of the same household, though we are not yet brought home. But at death we are actually present with them, and dwell and converse among them with holy familiarity, as citizens of the same heavenly Jerusalem, as part of the same sacred family, and at home, as children of the same God, and in their Father's house. The watchful Christian is at once carried into the midst of the blessed world by ministering angels, the world where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dwell, and made a speedy partaker of their blessedness, Luke xvi. 22.

6. *Consid.* Death brings with it a most amazing and inconceivable change of all our present circumstances and thoughts, our actions and pursuits, our sensations and enjoyments; I mean all those that relate to this life only, such as eating, drinking, buying, selling, &c. It dislodges from these bodies, and thereby finishes all those affections, concerns and troubles, which belong to the body, and sends us into another sort of world, whose affairs and concerns are such only, as belong to spirits, whether sinful or holy. A most delightful, or a most dreadful change! a world of unknown sorrows or unknown happiness! Luke, xxiii. 43, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke xvi. 22, "The rich man died, and in hell he lift up his eyes." And indeed the change is so vast, that, comparatively speaking, we know not what sorrow, or happiness is, till this day comes. Now, it is a very foolish and dangerous thing at best, to pass into such an extreme change of states, infinitely worse, or infinitely better, while we are asleep and at all uncertainties. What if it should be the miserable state, and we should awake in hell? But 'the watchful Christian is blessed, for he is ready for this amazing change.' He hath long lived upon it by faith and hope, though he

knows not so well what the particular enjoyments of heaven are; and he is well satisfied that he is prepared for that happy world by God himself. 2 Cor. v. 5, "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God." He is well pleased to have his faith changed into sight, and his hope into fruition. He hath been long pained and burdened in this sinful world, with the vain trifles, the poor low cares and amusements of it; the sins and sorrows and temptations that surrounded him in it, give him continual disquietudes, and he hath been training up in the school of Christ, by devotion and good works for those higher services of heaven. Since he can trust the promises of the gospel, and has had some small foretaste of these pleasures, he knows that the actions and employments, the business and joys of the upper world, are incomparably superior to any thing here on earth, and free from all the uneasy and defiling circumstances of this life. He is awake to receive this change: he rejoices in his removal from world to world: his vital and active powers are ready for the business of paradise, and he opens his heart to take in the joy.

7. *Consid.* Death makes its approaches oftentimes, and seizes us in such a manner as to give no room for prayers or repentance: then 'the blessedness of the watchful soul appears, that if he is carried out of the world and time in such a surprising way, he is safe for eternity.'

Sometimes the messenger of death stops all our thoughts and actions at once by a lethargic stroke, or confounds them all, by the delirious rovings of a fever; the light of reason is eclipsed and darkened, the powers of the mind are all obstructed, or the languishings of nature have so enfeebled them, that either we cannot exercise them to any spiritual purposes, or we are forbid to do it, for fear of counter-working the physician, increasing the malady, and hastening our death. Thus we are not capable of making any new preparation, for the important work of dying; we can make use of none of the means of grace, nor do any thing more to secure an interest in the love of God, the salvation of Christ, and the blessings of heaven.

This is a very dismal thought indeed. But the watchful Christian hath this blessedness, that he is fit to receive the sentence of death in any form; nor lethargies, nor deliriums, nor languors of nature, can destroy the seed of grace and religion in the heart, which were sown there in the

days of health : nor can any of the formidable attendants of death cancel his former transactions with God and Christ, about his immortal concerns. That great and momentous work was done before death appeared, or any of its attendants. He was not so unwise, as to leave matters of infinite importance at that dreadful hazard. He is not now to seek after a lost God, nor to begin his repentance for past sins. He is not now a stranger at the throne of grace, nor beginning to learn to pray. He is not now commencing his acquaintance with Jesus Christ his Saviour, in the midst of a tumult and hurry of thoughts and fears ; nor are the works of faith, and love, and holiness, to be now begun. Dreadful work indeed, and infinitely hazardous ! to begin to be convinced of sin on the borders of death, and to make our first enquiries after God and heaven, upon the very brink of hell! to begin to ask for pardon, when we can live in sin no longer ; to cry out, *Jesus, save me*, when the waves of the wrath of God, are breaking in upon the drowning soul ! Hopeless condition and extreme wretchedness ! to have all the hard work of conversion to go through, under the sinkings of feeble nature, and to begin the exercises of virtue and godliness, under the wild disorders of reason ! What a madness is it, to leave our infinite concerns at such a horrible uncertainty !

But these are not thy circumstances, oh wakeful Christian ; nor was this the case of our young departed friend, though her distemper soon discomposed her reasoning powers, and gave her very little opportunity to make a present preparation for dying. But she had heard the voice of Christ in his gospel betimes, and awoke to righteousness at his call, that she might be always ready for his summons in death. Religion was her early care, a fear to offend God possessed and governed her thoughts and actions from her childhood, and heavenly things were her youthful choice. She had appeared, for some years, in the public profession of Christianity, and maintained the practice of godliness in the church, and the world ; but it began much more early in secret. Her beloved closet, and her retiring hours, were silent witnesses of her daily converse with God, and her Saviour. There she devoted her soul to her Creator betimes, according to the encouragements and rules of the gospel of Christ, and there she found peace and salvation. It was there she made a

conscientious recollection of the sermons she heard in public, from her tender years, and left behind her these fruits of her memory and her pen, to attest what improvements she gained in knowledge, by the ministrations of the word; and her cabinet has now discovered to us another set of memoirs, wherein she continually observed what advances she might make in real piety by those weekly seasons of grace.

It was under these influences she maintained a most dutiful and affectionate behaviour to her honoured parents, and with filial fondness mingled with esteem, submission and reverence, paid her constant regards to the lady her mother, in her widowed estate. It was by the united principles of grace and nature, she lived with her younger sisters in uncommon harmony and friendship, as though one heart and soul animated them all. It was under these influences she ever stood upon her guard, amongst all the innocent freedoms of life: and though she did not immure herself, in the walls of a mother's house, but indulged a just curiosity to learn some of the forms of the world, the magnificence of courts, and the grandeurs of life; yet she knew how far to appear among them, and when to retire. Nor did she forbid herself all the polite diversions of youth, agreeable to her rank; nor did reason or religion, or her superior relatives forbid her; yet she was still awake to secure all that belongs to honour and virtue, nor did she use to venture to the utmost bounds, of what sobriety and religion might allow. Danger of guilt stands near the extreme limits of innocence.

Shall I let this paper inform the world, with what friendly decency, she treated her young companions and acquaintance; how far from indulging the modish liberties of scandal on the absent; how much she hated those scornful and derisive airs, which persons on higher ground, too often assume toward those who are seated in the inferior ranks of life? Is it proper I should say, how much her behaviour won upon the esteem of all that knew her, though I could appeal to the general sorrow at her death, to confirm the truth of it? But who can forbear on this occasion, to take notice, how far she acquired that lovely character in her narrow and private sphere, which seems almost to have been derived to her by inheritance, from her honoured father, deceased, who had the tears of his

country long dropping upon his tomb, and whose memory yet lives in a thousand hearts?

Such a conversation, and such a character, made up of piety and virtue, were prepared for the attacks of a fever, with malignant and mortal symptons. Slow and unsuspected were the advances of the disease, till the powers of reason began to falter and retire, till the heralds of death had made their appearance, and spread on her bosom, their purple ensigns. When these disorders began, her lucid intervals were longer, and while she thought no person was near, she could address herself to God, and say, how often she had given herself to him; she hoped she had done it sincerely, and found acceptance with him, and trusted that she was not deceived. The gleams of reason that broke in between the clouds, gave her light enough to discern her own evidences of piety, and refresh her hope. Then she repeated some of the last verses of the 139th Psalm in metre, viz.

"Lord, search my soul, try every thought:
Tho' my own heart accuse me not,
Of walking in a false disguise,
I beg the trial of thine eyes.

Doth secret mischief lurk within?
Do I indulge some unknown sin?
O turn my feet whene'er I stray,
And lead me in thy perfect way."

She was frequent and importunate in her requests for the Psalm-book, that she might read that Psalm, or at least have it read to her throughout; and it was with some difficulty, we persuaded her to be composed in silence: thus sincerely willing was she, that God might search and try her heart, still hoping well concerning her spiritual state, yet still solicitous about the assurance of her own sincerity, in her former transactions with heaven.

The next day among the roving of her thoughts, she rehearsed all those verses of the 17th Psalm, which are paraphrased in the same book, with very little faltering in a line or two:

"Lord I am thine; but wilt thou prove
My faith, my patience, and my love," &c.

The traces of her thoughts under this confusion of animal nature, retained something in them divine and heavenly.

O blessed situation of soul, when we stand prepared for

death, though it come with the formidable retinue of a disordered brain, and clouded reason! It would be too long at present to represent to you the 'sad consequences of being found asleep when Christ comes to call us away from this world,' I shall therefore only make these three reflections.

Reflect. 1. 'None can begin too early to awake to righteousness, and prepare for the call of Christ, since no one is too young to be sent for by his messenger of death.' I do not here speak of the state of infancy, when persons can hardly be said to be in a personal state of trial:* but when I say, 'none can awake too early to mind the things of religion,' I mean, after reason begins its proper exercise, and this appears sometimes in early childhood. All our life in this world, compared with heaven, is a sort of night and season of darkness; and if our Lord summon us away "in the first watch of the night," in the midst of youth and vigour, and the pleasing allurements of flesh and sense, we are in a deplorable state if we are found sleeping, and hurried away from earth, into the invisible world, in the midst of our foolish dreams of golden vani-

* Properly speaking, no one can now be said to be in a state of trial, since all are in a state of condemnation. Rom. v. 19. The trial has been made; man has fallen; and all are "by nature children of wrath." What the author and others mean by "a personal state of trial" is their being placed under a dispensation of long suffering, in which time is afforded for the exercise of unmerited grace towards those who are the subjects of it; occasion given to all the adult part of the human race to develope their real character, as alienated from God; and, in those places especially where the Lord has sent the gospel, opportunity granted to embrace the overtures of mercy, and thus return to the Fountain of blessedness from which they have sinfully departed. The trial consists in sufficient opportunity and privilege being bestowed upon them, and such a course of discipline administered, as may have a tendency to lead them to repentance, and to God. If they improve the circumstances in which they are placed, to the glory of God, and the salvation of their souls, it shows,—not that they have caused themselves to differ,—but that they have "obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." If they neglect and misimprove their privileges, and persevere in sin, they exhibit the fearful nature of our fallen state, demonstrate the power and magnitude of that grace by which any are saved, and justify to every mind and conscience the divine procedure, in condemning all who live and die impenitent. To say of any, therefore, that they are in "a state of personal trial," in any other sense than that they are placed in such circumstances, as to show the power of sin, or of grace in them, according as the one or the other of these contrary principles operates and reigns, would be opposed to fact; and as the language does not quadrate very well with Scripture, or with the true state of the case, it would be better not to employ it.—Ed.

ty. Dreadful indeed, to have a young thoughtless creature carried off the stage, sleeping and dead in trespasses and sins! Let those that are drunk with wine fall asleep upon the top of a mast in the middle of the sea, where the winds and the waves are tossing and roaring all around them.; let a madman who has lost his reason, lie down to sleep upon the edge of a precipice, where a pit of fire and brimstone is burning beneath him, and ready to receive his fall; but let not young sinners, whose rational powers are in exercise, and whose life is every moment a mere uncertainty, venture to go on in their dangerous slumbers, while the wrath of a God and eternal misery attend them, if they die before they are awake.

It is granted that no power beneath that which is divine, can effectually quicken a dead soul, and awaken it into a divine life. It is the work of "God to quicken the dead," Rom. iv. 17.; Eph. ii. 5. It is the son of God who is the "light and life of the world," John i. 4, to whom "the Father hath given this quickening power," John, vi. 26. He calls sinners to awaken them from their deadly sleep, Eph. v. 14; and "they live by him, as he lives by the Father," John vi. 57. He awakens dead souls to life, by the same *living spirit*, which "shall quicken their mortal bodies," and raise them from the grave, Rom. viii. 9, 11, 13; 2 Cor. iii. 3, which spirit he "hath received from the Father," John iii. 34. And on this account we are to seek the vital influences of this grace from heaven, by constant and importunate prayer. Yet in my text, as well as in other scriptures, "awaking out of sleep," and "watching unto righteousness," is represented as our duty, and we are to exert all our natural powers with holy fervency, for this end, while our daily petitions draw down from heaven the promised aid of grace. Our diligence in duty, and our dependence on the divine power and mercy, are happily and effectually joined in the command of our Saviour, on this very occasion, in one of his parables; Mark xiii. 33, "Watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is that the Lord will come." And again, chap. xiv. 38, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." Trust not in your own strength and sufficiency for the glorious change to be wrought in your sinful hearts, and yet neglect not your own labours and restless endeavours under a pretence, that it is God's work and not yours

"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

Nor should frail dying creatures in their youngest years, delay this work, one day, or one hour, since the consequences of being found asleep when Christ calls, are terrible indeed. We are beset with mortality all around us; the seeds of disease and dissolution are working within us from our very birth and cradle, ever since sin entered into our natures; and we should ever be in a readiness to remove hence, since we are never secure from the summons of heaven, the stroke of death, and the demands of the grave.

There was a lovely boy, the son of the Shunamite, who was given to his mother in a miraculous way, and when he was in the field among the reapers, he cried out, *my head, my head;* he was carried home immediately, and in a few hours died in his mother's bosom, 2 Kings iv. 18. Who would have imagined that head-ache should have been death, and that in so short a time too? This is almost the case which we lament at present; the head-ache was sent but a few days before, nor was the pain very intense, nor the appearance dangerous, yet it became the fatal, though unexpected fore-runner of death.

This providence is an awful warning-piece to all her young acquaintance, to be ready for a sudden removal; for she was of a healthy make, and seemed to stand at as great distance from the gates of death as any of you: but the firmest constitution of human nature is born with death in it. From every age, and every spot of ground, and every moment of time, there are short and sudden ways of descent to the grave. Trap-doors (if I may use so low a metaphor) are always under us, and a thousand unseen avenues to the regions of the dead. A malignant fever strikes the strongest nature with a mortal blast, at the command of the great Author and Disposer of life. My youngest hearers may be called away from the earth, by the next pain that seizes them. Nothing but religion, early religion, and sincere godliness, can give you hope in youthful death, or leave a fragrant savor on your name or memory among those that survive.

Reflect. 2. If such blessedness as I have described, belong to every watchful Christian at the hour of death, then it may not be improper here to take notice of 'some

peculiar advantages which attend those who shake off the deadly sleep of sin in their younger years, and are awake early to God and religion.'

(1.) They have much fewer sins to mourn over on a death-bed, and they prevent much bitter repentance for youthful iniquities. Holy Job was a man of distinguished piety, and God himself pronounces of him that "there was none like him in all the earth," Job i. 28. But it is a question whether his most early days were devoted to God, and whether he was so watchful over his behaviour, in that dangerous season of life; for he makes a heavy complaint in his addresses to God, Job xiii. 26, "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth." The sooner we begin to be awake to holiness, the more of these follies and sorrows are prevented. Happy those who have the fewest of them, to embitter their following lives, or make a death-bed painful!

(2.) Young persons have fewer attachments to the world, and the persons and things of it, which are round about them, and are more ready to part with it when their souls are united to God by an early faith and love. They have not yet entered into so numerous engagements of life, nor dwelt long enough here to have their hearts grown so fast on to creatures, which usually makes the parting stroke so full of anguish and smarting sorrow. A child can much more easily ascend to heaven, and leave a parent behind, without that tender and painful solicitude, which a dying parent has for the welfare of a surviving child. The surrender of all mortal interests at the call of God, is much more easy when our souls are not tied to them by so many strings, nor united by so many of the softer endearments of nature, and where grace has taught us to practise an early weaning from all temporal comforts, and a little loosened our hearts from them, by the faith of things eternal.

(3.) Those that have been awake betimes to godliness, give peculiar honours to the gospel at death, and leave this testimony to the divine religion of Jesus, that it was able to subdue passion and appetite in that season of life, when they are usually strongest and most unruly. They give peculiar credit and glory to the Christian name and the gospel, which has gained them so many victories over the

enemies of their salvation, at that age wherein multitudes are the captives of sin, and slaves to folly and vanity.

(4.) Those Christians who are awake to God in their early years, leave more happy and powerful examples of living and dying, to their young companions and acquaintance. It is the temper of every age of life, to be more influenced and affected by the practice of persons of the same years. Sin has fewer excuses to make, in order to shield itself from the reproof of such examples, who have renounced it betimes; and virtue carries with it a more effectual motive to persuade young sinners to piety and goodness, when it can point to its votaries of the same age, and in the same circumstances of life. 'Why may not this be practised by you, as well as by your companions round about you, of the same age?' But I must hasten to the last reflection.

Reflect. 3. 'When we mourn the death of friends who were prepared for an early summons, let their preparation be our support.' Blessed be God they were not found sleeping! While we drop our tears upon the grave of any young Christian who was awake and alive to God, that blessedness which Christ himself pronounces upon them, is a sweet cordial to mingle with our bitter sorrows, and will greatly assist to dry up the spring of them. The idea of their piety, and their approbation in the sight of God, is a balm to heal the wound, and give present ease to the heart-ache.

We are ready to run over their virtues, and spread abroad their amiable qualities in our thoughts, and then, with seeming reason, we give a loose to the mournful passion; whereas all these, when set in a true light, are real ingredients towards our relief.

We lament the loss of our departed friend, when we review that capacious and uncommon power of memory, which the God of nature had given her, and which was so well furnished with a variety of human and divine knowledge, and was stored with a rich treasure of the word of God, so that if Providence had called her into a more public appearance, she might have stood up in the world as a burning and shining light, so far as her sex and station required. This furniture of the mind seems indeed to be lost in death, and buried in the grave; but we give in too much to the judgment of sense. Did not this extensive

knowledge lay a foundation for her early piety? And did it not, by this means, prepare her for a more speedy removal to a higher school of improvement, and a world of sublimer devotion? And does she not shine there among the better and brighter company?

We mourn again for our loss of a person so valuable, when we think of that general calmness and sedateness of soul, which she possessed in a peculiar degree, so that she was not greatly elevated or depressed, by common accidents or occurrences: but this secured her from the rise of unruly passions, those stormy powers of nature, which sometimes sink us into guilt and distress, and make us unwilling and afraid of the sudden summons of Christ, lest he should find us under these disorders.

We think of her firmness of spirit, and that steady resolution, which, joined with a natural reserve, was a happy guard against many of the forward follies and dangers of youth, and proved a successful defence against some of the allurements and temptations of the gayer years of life: and then we mourn afresh that a person so well formed for growing prudence and virtue, should be so suddenly snatched away from amongst us. But this steady and dispassionate frame of soul, well improved by religion and divine grace, became an effectual means to preserve her youth more unblemished, and made her spirit fitter for the heavenly world, where nothing can enter that is defiled, and whose delights are not tumultuous as ours are on earth; but all is a calm and rational state of joy.

We lament yet further when we think of her native goodness and unwillingness to displease; but goodness is the very temper of that region to which she is gone, and she is the fitter companion for the inhabitants of a world of love.

We lament that such a pattern of early piety should be taken from the earth, when there are so few practisers of it, especially among the youth of our degenerate age, and in plentiful circumstances of life. But it is a matter of high thankfulness to God, who endowed her with those valuable qualities, and trained her up so soon for a world so much better than ours is. Let our sorrow for the deceased be changed into devout praises to divine grace. Let us imitate the holy language of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, and say, 'we are comforted' even at her grave,

'in all our affliction and distress, by the' remembrance of 'her faith' and piety. 'What' sufficient 'thanks can we render unto God, upon her account, for all the joy wherewith we rejoice for' her 'sake before our God, night and day, praying exceedingly that we may see her face' in the state of perfection? And 'may God himself, even our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way,' to the happy world, where she dwells, 1. Thess. iii. 7, &c. The imitation of what was excellent in her life, and watchful readiness to follow her in death, are the best honours we can pay her memory, and the wisest improvements of the present providence. May the Spirit of grace teach us these lessons, and make us all learn them with power, that when our Lord Jesus shall come to call us hence by death, or shall appear with all his saints, in the great rising-day, we may be found among his wakeful servants, and partake of the promised blessedness! *Amen.*

DISCOURSE III.

SURPRISE IN DEATH.

MARK xiii. 36. Watch ye therefore, lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

AMONG the parables of our Saviour, there are several recorded by the Evangelists, which represent him as a Prince, or Lord and Master of a family, departing for a season from his servants, and in his absence, appointing them their proper work, with a solemn charge to wait for his return; at which time he foretold them, that he should require an account of their behaviour in his absence, and he either intimates or expresses a severe treatment of those, who should neglect their duty while he was gone, or make no preparation for his appearance. He informs them also that he should come upon them on a sudden, and for this reason charges them to be always awake and upon their guard, ver. 35, "Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, whether at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning."

Though the ultimate design of these parables, and the 'coming of Christ' mentioned therein, refer to the great day of judgment, when he shall return from heaven, shall raise the dead, and call mankind to appear before his judgment seat, to receive a recompense according to their works; yet both the duties and the warnings, which are represented in these parables, seem to be very accommodable to the hour of our death; for then our Lord Jesus, who 'has the keys of death and' the grave, and 'the unseen world,' comes to finish our state of trial, and to put a period to all our works on earth: He comes then to call us into the invisible state; he disposes our bodies to the dust, and our souls are sent into other mansions, and taste some degrees of appointed happiness or misery, according to their behaviour here. The solemn and awful warning

which my text gives us concerning the return of Christ to judgment, may be therefore pertinently applied to the season, when he shall send his messenger of death, to fetch us hence; "Watch ye therefore, lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping."

When I had occasion to treat on a subject near akin to this,* I shewed that there was a distinction to be made, between the 'dead sleep of a sinner,' and 'slumber of an unwatchful Christian.' Those who never had the work of religion begun in their hearts or lives, are sleeping the sleep of death, whereas some who are made alive by the grace of Christ yet may indulge sinful drowsiness, and grow careless and secure, slothful and unactive. "The wise virgins as well as the foolish, were slumbering and sleeping," Matt. xxv. 5. The mischiefs and sorrows which attend each of these, when Christ shall summon them to judgment, or shall call them away from earth, by natural death, are great and formidable, though they are not equally dangerous. Let us consider each of them in succession, in order to rouse dead sinners from their lethargy, and to keep drowsy Christians awake.

First. Let us survey the sad consequences which attend those that are 'asleep in sin and spiritually dead,' when the hour of natural death approaches. They are such as these:

I. 'If they happen to be awakened on the borders of the grave, into what a horrible confusion and distress of soul are they plunged?' What keen anguish of conscience for their past iniquities seizes upon them? What bitter remorse and self-reproaches, for the seasons of grace which they have wasted, for the proposals of mercy which they have abused and rejected, and for the divine salvation which seems now to be lost for ever, and put almost beyond the reach of possibility and hope. They feel the messenger of death, laying his cold hands upon them, and they shudder and tremble, with the expectation of approaching misery. They look up to heaven and they see a God of holiness there, as a consuming fire ready to devour them, as stubble fit for the flame. They look to the Son of God, who has the keys of death in his hand, and who calls them away from the land of the living, even to Jesus, the com-

* In a funeral Sermon for Miss Sarah Abney, on Luke xii. 37. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching."

passionate Mediator, but they can scarce persuade themselves to expect any thing from him, because they have turned a deaf ear so long to the invitations of his gospel, and so long affronted his divine compassion. They look behind them, and with painful agonies are frighted at the mountains of their former guilt, ready to overwhelm them. They look forward, and see the pit of hell opening upon them, with all its torments; long darkness without a glimpse of light, and eternal despair with no glimmerings of hope.

Or, if, now and then amidst their horrors, they would try to form some faint hope of mercy, how are their spirits perplexed with prevailing and distracting fears, with keen and cutting reflections? 'Oh that I had improved my former seasons for reading, for praying, for meditating on divine things! But I cannot read, I can hardly meditate, and scarce know how to pray. Will the ear of God ever hearken to the cries and groans of a rebel that has so long resisted his grace? Are there any pardons to be had for a criminal, who never left his sins till vengeance was in view? Will the blood of Christ ever be applied to wash a soul, that has wallowed in his defilements, till death roused him out of them? Will the meanest favour of heaven, be indulged to a wretch who has grown bold in sin, in opposition to so loud and repeated warnings? I am awake indeed, but I can see nothing round me but distresses and discouragements, and my soul sinks within me, and my heart dies at the thoughts of appearing before God.'

It is a wise, and just observation among Christians, though it is a very common one, that the Scriptures give us *one* instance of a penitent saved in his dying hour, and that is the 'thief upon the cross,' that so none might utterly despair; but there is *but one* such instance given, that none might presume. The work of repentance is too difficult, and too important a thing, to be left to the languors of a dying bed, and the tumults and flutterings of thought, which attend such a late conviction. There can be hardly any effectual proofs given of the sincerity of such repentings: and I am verily persuaded there are few of them sincere; for we have often found these violent emotions of conscience vanish again, if the sinner has happened to recover his health. They seem merely to be the wild perplexities and struggles of nature, averse to misery, rather

than averse to sin. Their renouncing their former lusts, on the very borders of hell and destruction, is more like the vehement and irregular efforts of a drowning creature, constrained to let go a most beloved object, and taking eager hold of any plank for safety; rather than the calm and reasonable, and voluntary designs of a mariner, who forsakes his earthly joys, ventures himself in a ship that is offered him, and sets sail for the heavenly country. I never will pronounce such efforts and endeavours desperate, lest I limit the grace of God, which is unbounded; but I can give very little encouragement for hope to an hour or two, of this vehement and tumultuous penitence, on the very brink of damnation. 'Judas repented,' but his agonies of soul, hurried him to hasten his own death, "that he might go to his own place." And there is abundance of such kind of repenting, in every corner of hell; that is a deep and dreadful pit, whence there is no redemption, though there are millions of such sort of penitents; it is a strong and dark prison, where no beam of comfort ever shines, where bitter anguish and mourning for sins past, is no evangelical repentance, but everlasting and hopeless sorrow.

II. 'Those that are found sleeping at the hour of death' are carried away at once from all their sensual pursuits and enjoyments, which were their chosen portion, and their highest happiness.' At once they lose all their golden dreams, and their chief good is, as it were, snatched away from them at once and for ever. 'They stand on slippery places, they are brought to destruction in a moment,' and all their former joys 'are like a dream when one awaketh,' and finds himself beset round with terrors.

Are there any of you that are pleasing yourselves here in the days of youth and vanity, and indulge your dreams of pleasure, in the sleep of spiritual death? Think of the approaching moment, when the death of nature shall dissolve your sleep, and scatter all the delusive images of sinful joy. This separation from the body of flesh, is a fearful shock given to the soul, that makes it awake indeed. Sermons would not do it; the voice of the preacher was not loud enough; strokes of affliction, and smarting providences would not do it; perhaps the soul might be roused a little, but dropt into profound sleep again: sudden or surprising deaths near them, and even the pains of nature

in their own flesh, their own sicknesses and diseases, did not awaken them, nor the voice of the Lord in them all: but the parting-stroke that divides the soul and body, will terribly awaken the soul from the vain delusion, and all its fancied delights for ever vanish.

When they are 'visited by the Lord of hosts with this thunder and earthquake,' as the Prophet Isaiah speaks, when 'this storm and tempest' of death, shall shake the sinner out of his airy visions, he shall 'be as an hungry man that dreameth he was eating, but awakes and his soul is empty; or as a thirsty creature dreaming that he drinks, but he awaketh, and behold he is faint,' and his soul is pained with raging appetite. The sinner finds to his own torment, how wretchedly he has deceived himself and fed upon vanity. There are no more earthly objects to please his senses, and to gratify his inclinations; but the soul for ever lives upon a rack of carnal desire, and no proper object to satisfy it. His taste is not suited to the pleasures of a world of spirits; he can find no God there to comfort him. God with his offers of grace are gone for ever, and the world with its joys are for ever vanished, while the wretched and malicious creatures, into whose company he is hurried, and who were the tempters or associates of his crimes, shall stand round him to become his tormentors.

III. 'Though death will awaken sinful souls into a sharper and more lively sense of divine and heavenly things than ever they had in this world, yet they shall never be awakened to spiritual life and holiness.' And I think I may add, that though they should be awakened to a sight of God, and his justice, and his grace, to a sight of heaven and hell, more immediate and perspicuous than what even the saints themselves usually enjoy in this life, yet they would remain still under the bondage of their lusts, still dead in trespasses and sins. They shall for ever continue unbeloved of God, and incapable of all the happiness of the heavenly state, because they are for ever averse to the holiness of God, and themselves for ever unholy. It is only in the present state of trial, and under the present proposals of grace, that sleeping sinners can be awakened into the spiritual and divine life. The voice of the Son of God, that breaks the monuments of brass, and makes tombs of hardest marble yield to his call, shall never break one heart of stone, which is gone down to death, in its na-

tive and sinful hardness. That almighty voice that must awaken the nations of the dead, and command their bodies up from the grave, shall never awaken one dead soul, when they are past the limits of this life. The compassionate calls of a Saviour, and the offers of mercy, are then come to their utmost period: and if we refuse to hear the call of mercy to the moment of death, we shall then be terribly constrained to feel the loss of it, but never able to obtain the blessing.

Obstinate sleepers shall be awakened to see God, but only as Balaam was: "I shall see him but not nigh," Numb. xxiv. 17. The saints in this life have God near them in all their trials, as a father and a friend, to uphold, to comfort, to sanctify, though they see him but darkly through a glass, and behold but little of his power or glory. The sinner awaking in hell shall, perhaps, have a clearer and more acute perception of what God is, than any saint on earth: but he shall behold him as an enemy, and not a friend. If he beholds him in the glory of his grace, it is at a dreadful and insuperable distance; there is no grace for him. He sees him in his holiness, but he cannot love him, he has no meltings of true penitence for his former rebellions against God, his heart is hardened into everlasting enmity, and shall never taste of his love. Hence arise all the foul and gnawing passions of envy, malignity, and long despair, which are the very image of Satan, and change mankind into devils.

These impenitent sons and daughters of men, shall grow into the more complete likeness of those wicked spirits, and, under the impressions of their guilt and damnation, they shall rival those apostate and cursed creatures, in the obstinate hatred of God, and all that is holy.

IV. Hence it will follow in the *last* place, that the sinner who is 'fast asleep in his sins at the hour of death, shall awake into such a life as is worse than dying.' He shall be surprised all at once into darkness and fire, which have no gleam of light, and sorrows without mitigation, and which can find no end. The punishment of hell is not called *eternal death*, to denote a state of senseless and stupid existence; but *death* being the most opposite to life, and all the enjoyments of it, the misery of hell is described by death, as the most formidable thing to nature, as a word that puts a period to all the enjoyments of this

mortal life, and stands directly opposite to a life of joy and glory in the immortal world. Happy would it be for such souls if they could sink into an everlasting sleep, and grow stupid and senseless for ever and ever; but this is a favour not to be granted to those who have been constant and unrepenting rebels, against the law and the grace of God.

The moment when the body falls asleep in death, the soul is more awake than ever, to behold its own guilt and wretchedness. It has then such a lively and piercing sense of its own iniquities, and the divine wrath that is due to them, as it never saw or felt before. The inward senses of the soul (if I may so express it) which have been darkened and stupified, and benumbed in this body, are all awake at once, when the veil of flesh is thrown off, and the curtains are drawn back which divided them from the world of spirits. Every thought of sin, and the anger of God, wounds the spirit deep in this awakened state, though it scarce felt any thing of it before; and "a wounded spirit who can bear?" Prov. xviii. 14. But sinners must bear it days without end, and ages without hope.

Then the crimes they have committed, and the sinful pleasures they have indulged, shall glare upon their remembrance, and stare them in the face with dreadful surprise; and each of them is enough to drive a soul to despair. Nor can they turn their eyes away from the horrid sight, for their criminal practices beset them around, and the naked soul is all sight and all sense; it is eye and ear all over; it hears the dreadful curses of the law, and the sentence of the Judge, and never, never forgets it. This is the character, these the circumstances of an obstinate sinner, that awakes not till the moment of death, and "lift up his eyes in hell," as our Saviour expresses it. These will be the consequences of our guilt and folly, if we are found in a dead sleep of sin, when our Lord comes to call us from this mortal state.

Secondly, Let us spend a few thoughts also upon the dangerous and unhappy circumstances of those of whom we may 'have some reason to hope, that they have once begun religion in good earnest, and are made spiritually alive, but have indulged themselves in drowsiness, and worn out the latter end of their days in a careless, secure, and slothful frame of spirit.'

1. If they have had the principle of vital religion wrought

in their hearts, yet 'by these criminal slumbers, they darken and lose their evidences of grace, and by this means, they cut themselves off from the sweet reflections and comforts of it on a dying bed, when they have most need of them.' They know not whether they are the children of God or not, and are in anxious confusion and distressing fear. They have scarce any plain proofs of their conversion to God, and the evidences of true Christianity* ready at hand, when all are little enough to support their spirits. They have not used themselves to search for them by self-enquiry, and to keep them in their sight, and therefore they are missing in this important hour. They have not been wont to live upon their heavenly hopes, and they cannot be found when they want them to rest upon in death. They die therefore almost like sinners, though they may perhaps have been once converted to holiness, and there may be a root of grace remaining in them ; and the reason is, because they have lived too much as sinners do. They have given too great and criminal an indulgence, to the vain and worldly cares, or the trifling amusements of this life ; these have engrossed almost all their thoughts and their time, and therefore in the day of death they fall under terrors and painful apprehensions of a doubtful eternity just at hand.

If we have not walked closely with God in this world, we may well be afraid to appear before him in the next. If we have not maintained a constant converse with Jesus our Saviour, by holy exercises of faith and hope, it is no wonder if we are not so ready with cheerfulness and joy, to resign our departing spirits into his hand. It is possible we may have a right to the inheritance of heaven, having had some sight of it by faith as revealed in the gospel, having in the main chosen it for our portion, and set our feet in the path of holiness that leads to it ; but we have so often wandered out of the way, that in this awful and solemn hour, we shall be in doubt, whether we shall be received at the gates, and enter into the city.

Such unwatchful Christians have not kept the eternal glories of heaven, in their constant and active pursuit, they have not lived upon them as their portion and inheritance,

* That is, "evidences" of their being truly the followers of Christ, and of having an interest in him.—Ed.

they have been too much strangers to the invisible world of happiness, and they know not how to venture through death into it. They have built 'indeed upon the *solid* foundation, Christ Jesus' and the gospel, but they have mingled so much 'hay and stubble' with the superstructure, that when they depart hence, or when they appear before Christ in judgment, "they shall suffer great loss by the burning of their works, yet themselves may be saved so as by fire," 1 Cor. iii. 10—15. They may pass as it were by the flame of hell, and have something like the scorching terrors of it in death, though the abounding and forgiving grace of the gospel may convey them safe to heaven. They escape as a man that is awakened with the sudden alarms of fire, who suffers the loss of his substance, and a great part of the fruit of his labours, and just saves his own life. They plunge into eternity, and make a sort of terrible escape from hell.

2. 'They can never expect any peculiar favours from heaven at the hour of death, no special visitations of the comforting Spirit, nor that the love of God, and the joy of his presence, should attend them through the dark valley.' It is not to such unwatchful or sleepy Christians, that God is wont to vouchsafe his choicest consolations. They fall under terrible fears about the pardon of their sins, when they stand in most need of the sight of their pardon; and Christ, as the ruler of his church, sees it fit they should be thus punished for their negligence. They lay hold of the promises of mercy with a trembling hand, and cannot claim them by a vigorous faith, because they have not been wont to live upon them, nor do they see those holy characters in their own hearts and lives, which confirm their title to them. They have no bright views of the celestial world, and earnests of their salvation; for it is only for watchful souls, that these cordials are prepared in the fainting hour: it is only to the watchful Christian, that these fore-tastes of glory are given. "The fruit of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance for ever," Isai. xxxii. 17. "Blessed is he which watcheth, and keepeth his garments" clean, that he may enter with triumph into that city, where nothing shall enter that defileth.

3. 'Slumbering and slothful Christians are often-times left to wrestle with sore temptations of Satan, and have

dreadful conflicts in the day of death :' and the reason is evident, because they have not watched against their adversary, and obtained but few victories over him in their life. These temptations are keen and piercing thorns, that enter deep into the heart of a dying creature. The devil may be let loose upon them 'with great wrath, knowing that his time is but short ;' and yet there is great justice in the conduct of the God in heaven, in giving them up to be buffeted by the powers of hell. What frightful agonies are raised in the conscience, by the tempter, and the accuser of souls, on a sick or dying bed, can hardly be described by the living, and are known only to those who have felt them in death.

4. 'Such drowsy Christians make dismal work for new and terrible repentance on a death bed :' for, though they have sincerely repented in times past of their former sins, yet, having too much omitted the self-mortifying duties, having given too much indulgence to temptation and folly, and having not maintained this habitual penitence for their daily offences in constant exercise, their spirits are now filled with fresh convictions and bitter remorse of heart. The guilt of their careless and slothful conduct finds them out now, and beset them around, and they feel most acute sorrows, and wounding reflections of conscience, while they have need of most comfort. What a glorious entrance had St. Paul into the world of spirits, and the presence of Christ? He had made repentance, and mortification, and faith in Jesus, his daily work: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? I run, I fight, I subdue my body, and keep it under; I am crucified to the world, and the world to me ; the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." When he was "ready to be offered up, and the time of his departure was at hand," from the edge of the sword, and the borders of the grave, he could look back upon his former life, and say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give me." 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

5. 'The unwatchful Christian, at the hour of death, has the pain and anguish of reflecting, that he has omitted many duties to God and man, and these can never be performed now; that he has done scarce any services for

Christ in the world, and those must be left for ever undone: there is no further *work* or *device*, no labours of zeal, no activity for God 'in the grave,' whither we are hastening, Eccl. ix. 10. 'Alas! I have brought forth but little fruit to God, and it is well if I be not cast away as an unprofitable servant. My talents have lain bound up in rust, or been but poorly employed, whilst I have lain slumbering and unactive. The records of my life in the court of heaven, will shew but very little service for God amongst men: I have raised few monuments of praise to my Redeemer, and I can never raise them now. I shall have but few testimonies for my love and zeal, to appear in the great day of account, when the martyrs, and the confessors, and the lively Christians, shall be surrounded with the living ensigns of their victories over sin and the world, and their glorious services for their Redeemer. Wretch that I am! that I have loved my Lord at so cold a rate, and lain slumbering on a bed of ease, whilst I should have been fighting the battles of the Lord, and gaining daily honours for my Saviour!'

6. 'As such sort of Christians give but little glory to God in life, so they do him no honour in death: they are no ornaments to religion while they continue here, and leave perhaps but little comfort with their friends when they go hence.' Doubtings and jealousies about their eternal welfare, mingle with our tears and sorrows for a dying friend; these anxious fears about the departed spirit swell the tide of our grief high, and double the inward anguish. They are gone, alas! from our world, but we know not whither they are gone, to heaven or to hell. A sad farewel to those whom we love! a dismal parting-stroke, and a long heart ache!

And what honour can be expected to be done to God or his Son, what reputation or glory can be given to religion and the gospel, by a drowsy Christian departing, as it were, under a spiritual lethargy? He dies under a cloud, and casts a gloom upon the Christian faith. St. Paul was a man of another spirit, a lively and active saint, full of vigour and zeal in his soul. It was the holy resolution and assurance of this blessed apostle, "that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or death," Phil. i. 20. He spent 'his life' in the service of Christ, and he could rejoice in 'death as his gain.' It is a glory to the

gospel, when we can lie down and die with courage, in the hope of its promised blessings. It is an honour to our common faith, when it overcomes the terrors of death, and raises the Christian to a song of triumph, in view of the last enemy. It is a new crown put upon the head of our Redeemer, and a living cordial put into the hands of mourning friends in our dying hour, when we can take our leave of them with holy fortitude, rejoicing in the salvation of Christ. No sooner does he call but we are ready, and can answer, with holy transport, 'Lord I come.' This is a blessing that belongs only to the watchful Christian. May every one of us be awake to salvation in our expiring moments, and partake of this glorious blessedness!

I proceed now to a few *remarks*, and particularly such as relate to the necessity and duty of constant watchfulness, and the hazardous case of sleeping souls.

1. *Remark.* 'To presume on long life is a most dangerous temptation, for it is the common spring and cause of spiritual sleep and drowsiness.' Could we take an inward view of the hearts of men, and trace out the springs of their coldness and indifference about eternal things, and the shameful neglect of their most important interests, we should find this secret thought in the bottom of their hearts, that 'we are not like to die to-day or to-morrow.' They put this evil day afar off, and indulge themselves in their carnal delights, without the solicitude to prepare for the call of God. There is scarce any thing produces so much evil fruit in the world, so much shameful wickedness amongst the sensual and profane, or such neglect of lively religion among real Christians, as this bitter root of presumption upon life and time before us. Matth. xxiv. 48, 49, "The evil servant" did not "begin to smite his fellows and to eat and drink with the drunken," till he "said in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming:" It was "while the bridegroom tarried," and they imagined he would tarry longer, that even the *wise virgins* fell into *slumbers*. Ask your own hearts, my friends, does not this thought secretly lurk within you, when you comply with a temptation, 'surely I shall not die yet: I have no sickness upon me, nor tokens of death, I shall live a little longer, and repent of my follies?' Vain expectation and groundless fancy! when you see the young, and the strong, and the healthy, seized away from the midst of you, and the final

period put at once to all their works and designs in this life. Yet we are foolish enough to imagine our term of life shall be extended, and we presume upon months and years, which God hath not written down for us in his own book, and which he will never give us to enjoy.

We are all borderers upon the river of death, which conveys us into the eternal world, and we should be ever waiting the call of our Lord, that we may launch away with joy, to the regions of immortality. But thoughtless creatures that we are, we are perpetually wandering far up, into the fields of sense and time, we are gathering the gay and fading flowers that grow there, and filling our laps with them as a fair treasure, or making garlands for ambition to crown our brows, till one and another of us is called off on a sudden, and hurried away from this mortal coast. Those of us who survive, are surprised a little, we stand gazing, we follow our departing friends with a weeping eye for a minute or two, and then we fall to our amusements again, and grow busy as before, in gathering the flowers of time and sense. O how fond we are to enrich ourselves with these perishing trifles, and adorn our heads with honours and withering vanities, never thinking which of us may receive the next summons to leave all behind us, and stand before God; but each presumes, 'it will not be sent to me.' We trifle with God and things eternal, or utterly forget them, while our hands and our hearts are thus deeply engaged in the pursuit of our earthly delights. All our powers of thought and action, are intensely busied amongst the dreams of this life, while we are asleep to God, because we vainly imagine he will not call us yet.

2. *Remark.* 'Whatsoever puts us in mind of dying, should be improved to awaken us from our spiritual sleep.' Sudden deaths near us should have this effect; our young companions and acquaintance snatched away from among us in an unexpected hour, should become our monitors in death, and teach us this divine and needful lesson. The surprising loss of our friends who lay near our hearts, should put us in mind of our own departure, and powerfully awaken us from our dangerous slumbers. Sinners, when they feel no sorrows, think of no death; but 'when the judgments of God are in the earth,' his Spirit can awaken 'the inhabitants of the world to learn righteousness.' At such seasons it is time for 'the sinners in Zion' to be

'afraid,' and 'fearfulness to surprise the hypocrites.' Even the children of God have sometimes need of painful warning-pieces, to awaken them from their careless, their slothful, and their secure frame: and as for those souls who are indeed awake to righteousness, and lively in the practice of all religion and virtue, such sudden and awful strokes of Providence have a happy tendency to wean them from creatures, and keep them awake to God, that 'when their Lord comes he may find them watching,' and pronounce upon them everlasting *blessedness*.

3. *Remark*. 'No person can be exempted from this duty of watchfulness, till he is Lord of his own life, and can appoint the time of his own dying.' Then indeed you might have some colour for your carnal indulgences, some pretence for sleeping, if you were sovereign of death and the grave, and had the keys in your own hand.

And truly such as venture to sleep in sin, do in effect say, we are lords of our own life. They act and manage as if their times were in their own hands, and not in the hand of their Maker. But the watchful Christian lives upon that principle, which David professes, Psal. xxxi. 15, "My times are in thine hand," O Lord; and they never give rest to themselves till they can rejoice with him, and say to the Lord, "*thou art my God; into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed it*, and I leave it to thy appointment when thou wilt dislodge me from this body of flesh and blood, and call me into thy more immediate presence." If we could but resist the messenger of death, when the Lord of hosts has sent it, if we could shut the mouth of the grave when the Son of God has opened it for us, with the key that is entrusted in his hand, we might say then to our souls, 'Sleep on upon your bed of ease, and take your rest; but woe be to those who will venture to sleep in an unholy and unpardoned state, or even allow themselves the indulgence of short and sinful slumbers, when they cannot resist death one moment, when they cannot delay the summons of heaven, when they cannot defer their appearance before that Judge, whose sentence is eternal pleasure, or everlasting pain.

Our holy watch must not be intermitted one moment, for every following moment is a grand uncertainty. There is no minute of life, no point of time, wherein I can say,

'I shall not die,' and therefore I should not dare to say, 'this minute I will take a short slumber.' What if my Lord should summon me while he finds me sleeping? His command cannot be disobeyed, the very call and sound of it divides me from flesh and blood, and all that is mortal, and sends me at once into the eternal world, for it is an almighty voice.

4. *Remark.* As it is a foolish and dangerous thing, for any of the sons and daughters of men to presume upon long life, and neglect their watch, so 'persons under some peculiar circumstances, are eminently called to be ever wakeful.' Give me leave here to reckon up some of them, and make a particular address to the persons concerned.

(1.) 'Is your constitution of body weak and feeble?' You carry then a perpetual warning about you never to indulge sinful drowsiness. Every languor of nature assures you that it is sinking to the dust: every pain you feel, should put you in mind, that the pains of death are ready to seize you: you are tottering upon the very borders of the grave, and will you venture to drop in before your hopes of life and immortality are secured, and a joyful resurrection? You pass perhaps many nights, wherein the infirmities of your flesh will not suffer you to sleep, and to take that common refreshment of nature, and shall not these same infirmities keep you awake to things spiritual, and rouse all your thoughts and cares about your immortal interests?

(2.) 'You whose circumstances or employments of life, expose you to perpetual dangers either by land or by sea;' you who carry your lives as it were in your hand, and are often in a day within a few inches of death; is it not necessary for you to inquire daily, Am I prepared for a departure hence? Am I ready to hear the summons of my Lord, and ready to give up my account before him? Shall I dare go on another day with my sins unpardoned, with my soul unsanctified, and in immediate danger of eternal misery? A fall from a horse, or a house-top, may send you down to the pit whence there is no redemption; every wind that blows, and every rising wave, may convey you into the eternal world, and are you ready to meet the great God in such a surprise, and without warning?

(3.) You who are 'young and vigorous, and flourish amidst all the gaieties and allurements of life,' you are in

most danger of being lulled asleep in sin, and therefore I addressed you lately in a funeral discourse, when the present providence gave each of you a new and loud call to awake, and I pray God you may hear his voice in it.

(4.) Perhaps others of you are arrived at old age, and the course of nature forbids you to expect a long continuance in the land of the living: are any of my hearers ancient sinners and asleep still? Venturous and thoughtless creatures! that have grown old in slumber, and worn out their whole life in iniquities! Surely it is time for you to hear the voice of the Son of God in the gospel, and accept of his salvation. Behold the Judge is at the door, he comes speedily, and he will not tarry, his herald of death is just at hand. Are you willing he should seize you in a deadly sleep, and send you into eternal sorrows?

And let *aged* Christians bestir themselves, and awake from their slothful and secure frames of spirit; let them look upward to the crown that is not far off, to the prize that is almost within reach. 'Whatsoever your hand' or heart 'find to do' for God, 'do it with all your' zeal and 'might: let your loins be girt' about, and your natural powers active in his service, 'let your lamp' of profession be bright and *burning*, that when Jesus comes, ye may receive him with joy.

(5.) And are there any of you 'that are under decays of grace and piety,' that are 'labouring and wrestling with strong corruptions,' or in actual conflict with repeated temptations which too often prevail over you? It becomes you to hear the watch-word which Christ often gives to his churches under such circumstances: make haste and awake unto holiness, 'be watchful and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die; hold fast what thou hast received; remember thy first affection and zeal, and repent' and mourn for what thou hast lost, 'lest I come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know the hour.' Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, for thou hast lost thy first love. Have a care of dangerous *luke-warmness*, and indifference in the things of religion. This is the very temper of a sleepy declining Christian, while he dreams he is rich and has great attainments. Take heed, lest presuming upon thy riches and thy self-sufficiency, thou shouldest be found 'wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' Keep your souls

awake hourly, and be upon your guard against every adversary, and every defilement, lest ye be seized away in the commission of some sin, or in the compliance with some foul temptation. The drowsy soldier is liable to be led captive, and to die in fetters, and groan heavily in death. But 'blessed is the watchful' Christian; he shall be found amongst the *overcomers*, and shall partake of the rich variety of divine favours, which are contained in the epistles to the seven churches. Rev. ii. and iii.

Though the greatest part of a former discourse, has been describing the blessedness of a watchful Christian at the hour of death, and in this I have set before you the sad consequences that attend sleepers (both which are powerful *preservatives* against drowsiness,) yet at the conclusion of this sermon, give me leave to add a few more *motives* to the duty of watchfulness, for we cannot be too well guarded against the danger of spiritual sloth and security.

Motive 1. 'Our natures at best in the present state are too much inclined to slumber.' We are too ready to fall asleep hourly: all the saints on earth, even the most lively and active of them, are not out of danger, while they carry this flesh and blood about them. Indeed the best of Christians here below dwell but as it were in twilight, and in some sense they may be described as persons between sleeping and waking, in comparison of the world of spirits. We behold divine things here but *darkly*, and exert our spiritual faculties but in a feeble manner: it is only in the other world, that we are broad awake, and in the perfect and unrestrained exercise of our vital powers; there only the complete life and vigour of a saint appears. In such a drowsy state then, and in this dusky hour, we cannot be too diligent in rousing ourselves, lest we sink down into dangerous slumbers. Besides, if we profess to be 'children of the light and of the day,' and growing up to a brighter immortality, 'let us not sleep as others do' who are the sons and daughters of night and darkness. 1 Thess. v. 4, 5.

Motive 2. 'Almost every thing around us in this world of sense and sin, tends to lull us asleep again, as soon as we begin to be awake.' The busy or the pleasant scenes of this temporal life are ever calling away our thoughts from eternal things, they conceal from us the spiritual world, and close our eyes to God, and things divine and

heavenly. If the eye of the soul were but open to invisible things, what lively Christians should we be? But either the winds of worldly cares rock us to sleep, or the charm of worldly pleasures soothe us into deceitful slumbers. We are too ready to indulge earthly delights, and while we dream of pleasure in the creatures, we lose, or at least, abate our delights in God. Even the lawful satisfactions of flesh and sense, and the enticing objects round about us, may attach our hearts so fast to them, as to draw us down into a bed of carnal ease, till we fall asleep in spiritual security, and forget that we are made for heaven, and that our hope and our home is on high.

Motive 3. 'Many thousands have been found sleeping at the call of Christ.' Some perhaps in a profound and deadly sleep, and others in an hour of dangerous slumber. Many an acquaintance of ours has gone down to the grave, when neither they nor we thought of their dying at such a season. But as thoughtless as they were, they were never the further from the point of death; and we shudder with horror when we think what is become of their souls.

While we are young, we are ready to please ourselves with the enjoyments of life, and flatter our hopes with a long succession of them. We suppose death to be at the distance 'of fifty or threescore miles;' threescore years and ten is the appointed period. But alas! how few are there whose hopes are fulfilled, or whose life is extended to those dimensions? Perhaps the messenger of death is within a furlong of our dwelling; a few more steps onward, and he smites us down to the dust.

There are some beautiful verses which I have read perhaps thirty years ago, wherein the ingenious author describes the different stages of human life, under the image of a fair prospect or landscape, and death is placed by mistaken mortals, afar off, beyond them all. Since the lines return now upon my remembrance, I will repeat them here with some small alteration. They are as follows:

Life and the scenes that round it rise,
Share in the same uncertainties,
Yet still we hug ourselves with vain presage
Of future days, serene and long,
Of pleasures fresh and ever strong,
An active youth, and slow declining age.

Like a fair prospect, still we make
Things future pleasing forms to take:
First verdant meads arise and flowery fields;
Cool groves and shady copses here,
There brooks and winding streams appear,
While change of objects still new pleasures yields.

Farther, fine castles court the eye,
There wealth and honours we espy;
Beyond, a huddled mixture fills the stage,
Till the remoter distance shrouds
The plains with hills, those hills with clouds;
There we place death behind old shivering age.

When death alas, perhaps too nigh,
In the next hedge doth skulking lie,
There plants his engines, thence lets fly his dart,
Which while we ramble without fear,
Will stop us in our full career;
And force us from our airy dreams to part.

How fond and vain are our imaginations, when we have seen others called away on a sudden from the early scenes of life, to promise ourselves a long continuance here! We have the same feeble bodies, the same tabernacles of clay, that others have, and we are liable to many of the same accidents or casualties: the same killing diseases are at work in our natures, and why should we imagine, or presume, that others should go so much before us?

And if we enquire of ourselves as to character or merit, or moral circumstances of any kind, and compare ourselves with those that are gone before, what foundation have we to promise ourselves a longer continuance here? Have we not the same sins, or greater, to provoke God? Are we more useful in the world than they, and do more service for his name? May not God summon us off the stage of life on a sudden, as well as others? What are we better than they? Are we not as much under the sovereign disposal of the great God as any of our acquaintance who have been seized in the flower and prime of life, and called away in an unexpected hour? And what power have we to resist the seizure, or what promise to hope that God will delay longer? Let us then no more deceive ourselves with vain imaginations, but each of us awake and bestir ourselves as though we were the next persons to be called away from this assembly, and to appear next before the Lord.

Motive 4. 'When we are awake, we are not only fitter for the coming of our Lord to call us away by death, and

fitter for his appearance to the great judgment, but we are better prepared also to attend him in every call to present duty, and more ready to meet his appearance in every providence.' It is the Christian soldier who is ever awake and on his guard, that is only fit for every sudden appointment to new stations and services, he is more prepared for any post of danger or hazardous enterprise, and better furnished to sustain the roughest assaults. We shall be less shocked at sudden afflictions here on earth, if our souls keep heaven in view, and are ready winged for immortality. When we are fit to die we are fit to live also, and to do better service for God in whichsoever of his worlds he shall please to appoint our station. My business, O Father, and my joy, is to do thy will among the sons of mortality, or among the spirits of the blest on high.

Motive 5. 'Let us remember we have slept too long already in days past, and it is but a little while that we are called to watch.' We have worn away too much of our life in sloth and drowsiness. The 'night is far spent' with many of us, "the day is at hand; it is now high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed," Rom. xiii. 11, 12. Another hour or two, 'and the night will be at an end with us:' Jesus the morning star is just appearing; what? 'can we not watch one hour?' O happy souls! that keep themselves awake to God in the midst of this dreaming world! Happy indeed, when our Lord shall call us out of these dusky regions, and we shall answer his call with holy joy, and spring upward to the inheritance of the saints in light! Then all the seasons of darkness, and slumbering, will be finished for ever; there is no need of laborious watchfulness in that world, where there is no flesh and blood to hang heavy upon the spirit; but the sanctified powers of the soul are all life, and immortal vigour. There is 'no want of the sun-beams' to make their day-light, or to irradiate 'that city; the glory of God enlightens it' with divine splendors, 'and the Lamb is the light thereof.' No inhabitant can sleep under such a united blaze of grace and glory. No faintings of nature, no languors or weariness are found in all that vital climate; every citizen is for ever awake and busy under the beams of that glorious day; zeal, and love, and joy, are the springs of their eternal activity, and 'there is no night there.'

DISCOURSE IV.

CHRIST ADMIRED AND GLORIFIED IN HIS SAINTS.

2 Ep. Thessal. i. 10. When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

How mean and contemptible soever our Lord Jesus Christ might appear heretofore on earth, yet there is a day coming when he shall make a glorious figure in the sight of men and angels. How little soever the saints may be esteemed in our day, and look poor and despicable in an ungodly world, yet there is an hour approaching when they shall be glorious beyond all imagination, and Christ himself shall *be glorified* in them. In that day shall the Lord our Saviour be the object of adoration and wonder, not only among those of the sons of men that have believed on him, but before all the intellectual creation, and that upon the account of his grace manifested in believers.

The natural enquiry that arises here is this, 'What particular instances of the grace of Christ in his saints, shall be the matter of our admiration, and his glory in that day?'

To this I shall propose an answer under the following particulars.

First, It is a matter of pleasing wonder, 'that persons of all characters should have been united in one faith, and persuaded to trust in the same Saviour, and embrace the same salvation;' for some of all sorts shall stand in that blessed Assembly. Then it shall be a fruitful spring of wonder and glory, that men of various nations and ages, of different tempers, capacities, and interests, of contrary educations, and contrary prejudices, should believe one gospel, and trust in one Deliverer, from hell and death; that the sprightly, the studious and the stupid, the wise and the foolish, should relish and rejoice in the same sublime truths, not only concerning the true God, but also concer-

ning Jesus the Redeemer; that the Barbarian and the Roman, the Greek and the Jew, should approve and receive the same doctrines of salvation, that they should come into the same sentiments in the matters of religion, and live upon them as their only hope.

Astonishing spectacle! when the dark and savage inhabitants of Africa, and our fore-fathers, the rugged and warlike Britons, from the 'ends of the earth,' shall appear in that assembly, with some of the polite nations of Greece and Rome, and each of them shall glory in having been taught to renounce the gods of their ancestors, and the demons which they once worshipped, and shall rejoice in Jesus the king of Israel, and in Jehovah the everlasting God.

The conversion of the Gentile world to Christianity, is a matter of glorious wonder, and shall appear to be so in that great day. That those who had been educated to believe many gods, or no god at all, should renounce atheism and idolatry, and adore the true God only: and those that were taught to sacrifice to idols, and to atone for their own sins with the blood of beasts, should trust in one sacrifice, and the atoning blood of the Son of God. Here shall stand a *believing atheist*, and there a *converted idolater*, as monuments of the Almighty power of his grace.

There shall shine also in that assembly, here and there a prince, and a philosopher, though 'not many wise, not many noble, not many mighty are called;' and they shall be matter of wonder and glory; that princes who love no control, should bow their sceptres and their souls, to the royality and godhead of the poor man of Nazareth; that the *heathen philosophers*, who had been used only to yield to reason, should submit their understandings to divine revelation, even when it has something above the powers and discoveries of reason in it.

It shall raise our holy wonder too when we shall behold some of the Jewish Priests and Pharisees, who became converts to the Christian faith, adorning the triumph of that day. The Jewish Pharisees who expected a glorious temporal prince for their Messiah, that they should at last own the son of a carpenter for their Teacher, their Saviour and their king: that they should veil the pride of their souls, and acknowledge a parcel of poor fishermen for his chief ministers of state, and receive them as ambassadors

to the world. That those who thought they were righteous, and boasted in it, should renounce their boastings and their righteousnesses, and learn to expect salvation and life for themselves, from the death and righteousness of another: that they who once called the cross of Christ 'folly and weakness,' should come to see the 'wisdom and power of God' in crucified man, and believe him who hung upon a tree as an accursed creature, to be Emmanuel, God with us, 'God manifest in the flesh,' and the Saviour of mankind.

Surely shall men and angels say in that day, 'these were the effects of an Almighty power, it was the work of God the Saviour, and it is marvellous in our eyes.' With united voice shall all the saints confess, "flesh and blood has not revealed this unto us, but the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of God the Father. We had perished in our folly, but Christ has been *made wisdom to us*; we were in darkness and lay under the shadow of death, but *Christ has given us light*." 1 Cor. i. 30. Ephes. v. 14.

Come, all ye saints of these latter ages upon whom the end of the world is come, raise your heads with me and look far backwards, even to the beginning of time and the days of Adam; for the believers of all ages, as well as of all nations shall appear together in that day, and acknowledge Jesus the Saviour. According to the brighter or darker discoveries of the age in which they lived, he has been the common object of their faith. Ever since he was called the 'seed of the woman,' till the time of his appearance in the flesh, all the chosen of God have lived upon his grace though multitudes of them never knew his name. It is true the greater part of that illustrious company on the right hand of Christ, lived since the time of his incarnation, (for the "great multitude which no man could number, is derived from the Gentile nations," Rev. vii. 9.) Yet the ancient patriarchs, with the Jewish prophets and saints, shall make a splendid appearance there: 'one hundred and forty-four thousand are sealed among the tribes of Israel. These of old embraced the gospel in types and shadows; but now their eyes behold Christ Jesus, the substance and the truth. In the days of their flesh they read his name in dark lines and looked through the long glass of prophecy to distant ages, and a Saviour to come, and now behold

they find complete and certain salvation and glory in him. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." Heb. xi. 13. They died in the *hope* of this salvation, and they shall arise in the blessed *possession* of it.

Behold Abraham appearing there. the Father of the faithful, who 'saw the day of Christ,' and *rejoiced* to see it, who trusted in his Son Jesus two thousand years before he was born. His elder family the pious Jews surround him there, and we his younger children among the Gentiles, shall stand with him as the followers of his faith, who trust in the same Jesus almost two thousand years after he is dead. How shall we both 'rejoice to see this *brightest* day' of the Son of man, and congratulate each other's faith, while our eyes meet and centre in him, and our souls triumph in the sight and love, and enjoyment of him in whom we believed! How admirable and divinely glorious shall our Lord himself appear, on whom every eye is fixed with unutterable delight, in whom the faith of distant countries and ages is centred and reconciled, and in whom 'all the nations of the earth' appear to be 'blessed,' according to the ancient word of promise. Gen. xv. and xvii.

Secondly, It is a further occasion of pleasing wonder, 'that so many wicked obstinate wills of men, and so many perverse affections, should be bowed down, and submit themselves to the holy rules of the gospel.' This is another instance of the grace of Christ, and shall be the subject of our joyful admiration. Every son and daughter of Adam by nature is averse to God, and inclined to sin, a child of disobedience and death. Eph. ii. 2. There is a new miracle wrought by Christ in every instance of converting grace, and he shall have the glory of them all in that day. It is a first resurrection from the dead, it is a new creation, and the Almighty power shall then be publicly adored.

Then one shall say, 'I was a *sensual sinner*, drenched in liquor and unclean lusts, and wicked in all the forms of lewdness and intemperance: "the grace of God my Saviour appeared to me, and taught me to deny worldly lusts," which I once thought I could never have parted with. I loved my sins as my life, but he has persuaded and con-

strained me to cut off a right hand, and to pluck out a right eye, and to part with my darling vices ; and behold me here a monument of his saving mercy.'

'I was *envious* against my neighbour, (shall another say,) and my temper was *malice and wrath ; revenge* was mingled with my constitution, and I thought it no iniquity. But I bless the name of Christ my Redeemer, who in the day of his grace turned my wrath into meekness ; he inclined me to love even mine enemies, and to pray for them that cursed me ; he taught me all this by his own example, and he made me learn it by the sovereign influences of his Spirit. I am a wonder to myself, when I think of what once I was. Amazing change and almighty grace !'

Then a third shall confess, 'I was a *profane wretch*, a *swearer*, a *blasphemer ;* I hoped for no heaven, and I feared no hell ; but the Lord seized me in the midst of my rebellions, and sent his arrows into my soul ; he made me feel the stings of an awakened conscience, and constrained me to believe there was a God and a hell, till I cried out astonished, *what shall I do to be saved?* Then he led me to partake of his own salvation, and from a proud rebellious infidel, he has made me a penitent and a humble believer ; and here I stand to shew forth the wonders of his grace, and the boundless extent of his forgiveness.'

A fourth shall stand up and acknowledge in that day, 'And I was a *poor carnal covetous creature*, who made this world my god, and abundance of money was my heaven ; but he cured me of this vile idolatry of gold, taught me how to obtain treasures in the heavenly world, and to forsake all on earth, that I might have an inheritance there ; and behold he has not disappointed my hope : I am now made rich indeed, and I must forever speak his praises.'

There shall be no doubt or dispute in that day, whether it was the power of our own will, or the superior power of divine grace, that wrought the blessed change, that turned a lion into a lamb, a grovelling earth-worm into a bird of paradise, and of a covetous or malicious sinner, made a meek and a heavenly saint. The grace of Christ shall be so conspicuous in every glorified believer in that assembly, that with one voice they shall all shout to the praise and glory of his grace ; "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name be all the honour." Psal. cxv. 1.

Thirdly, It shall be the matter of our wonder, and the glory of Christ in that day, 'that so many thousand guilty wretches should be made righteous by one righteousness, cleansed in one laver from all their iniquities, and sprinkled unto pardon and sanctification, with the blood of one man, Jesus Christ.' See the "great multitude that no man can number," Rev. vii. 9. 10. They all "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," ver. 14.

It is a matter of wonder to us now on earth, that the blessed Son of God who is one with the Father, should stoop so low as to unite himself to a mortal nature, that he should become a poor despicable man, and pass through a life of sufferings and sorrows, and die an accursed death, to redeem us from guilt and deserved misery. But when we shall see him in his native glory and lustre, his acquired dignities, and all the honours of heaven heaped upon him, it will raise our wonder high, to think that such a One should once humble himself to the death of the cross, the death of the vilest slave, that he might save our souls from dying; that he should pour out his own blood to wash off the stains of millions of sins, that we might appear righteous before a God of holiness. Then shall the multitude of the saved join in that song, "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever." Rev. i. 5, 6. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and honour, for thou hast redeemed us with thy blood from every kindred, tribe and nation." Rev. v.

Then shall those blessed words of Scripture appear and shine in full glory, howsoever they are often passed over in silence, and too much forgotten in our age, Rom. v. 17, 19, 21. "If by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Then shall our blessed Lord shine in the complete lustre of that incommunicable name, JEHOVAH TZIDKENU, *the Lord our righteousness.* Jer. xxiii. 6.

And not only the *atonement* and *salvation* itself, shall be the subject of our glorious admiration, but the 'way and manner' how sinners partake of it, shall minister further to our wonder, and to the glory of Christ. That such a world of poor miserable creatures should be saved from hell, by *believing* or trusting in grace, when they could never be saved by all their own *works;* that they should obtain righteousness and acceptance unto eternal life, by a humble penitence and poverty of spirit, depending on the death and righteousness of another, when all their labours and toil in works of the law, could not make up a righteousness of their own, sufficient to appear before the justice of God; Christ will not only be glorified in their *holiness* as *saints*, but admired and honoured in and by their *faith* as *believers*. His blood and his grace shall share all the glory. "Therefore it is of faith," and not of works, "that it might be of grace," Rom. iv. 15. Yet this saving *faith* is the spring of shining holiness in every believer. Duties and virtues are not left out of our religion, when faith is brought into it. The graces of the saints join happily with the atonement of Christ, to render that day more illustrious.

Fourthly, 'That a company of such feeble Christians, should maintain their course towards heaven, through so many thousand obstacles:' this shall be another subject of admiration, and yield a further revenue of glory to our Lord Jesus Christ, for he who is their righteousness is their strength also. Isa. xlv. 24, 25. "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel glory" in that day, as their strength and their salvation. They have broke through all their difficulties, and were "able to do all things through Christ strengthening them." Phil. iv. 13.

Behold that noble army with palms in their hands; once they were weak warriors, yet they overcame mighty enemies, and have gained the victory and the prize; enemies rising from earth, and from hell, to tempt and to accuse them, but "they overcame by the blood of the Lamb," Rev. xii. 7, 11. What a divine honour shall it be to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, that weak Christians should subdue their strong corruptions, and get safe to heaven through a thousand oppositions within and without? It is all owing to the grace of Christ, that there is grace which is all-sufficient for every saint, 2 Cor. xii. 9.

They are "made more than conquerors through him that has loved them," Rom. viii. 38.

Then shall the faith, and courage, and patience of the saints, have a blessed review; and it shall be told before the whole creation what strife and wrestlings a poor believer has passed through in a dark cottage, a chamber of long sickness, or perhaps in a dungeon; how he has there combated with powers of darkness, how he has struggled with huge sorrows, and 'has borne and has not fainted,' though he has been often 'in heaviness through manifold temptations.' Then shall appear the bright scene which St. Peter represents as the event of sore trials, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. When our 'faith has been tried in the fire' of tribulation, and is found 'more precious than gold,' it shall shine to the 'praise, honour, and glory,' of the suffering saints, and of Christ himself 'at his appearance.'

Behold that illustrious troop of martyrs, and some among them of the feeblest sex and of tender age; now, that women should grow bold in faith, even in the sight of torments, and children, with a manly courage, should profess the name of Christ in the face of angry and threatening rulers; that some of these should become undaunted confessors of the truth, and others triumph in fire and torture; these things shall be matter of glory to Christ in that day; it was his power that gave them courage and victory in martyrdom and death. Every Christian there, every soldier in that triumphing army, shall ascribe his conquest to the grace of his Lord, his Leader, and lay down all their trophies at the feet of his Saviour, with humble acknowledgments and shouts of honour.

Almost all the saved number were, at some part of their lives, weak in *faith*, and yet, by the grace of Christ, they held out to the end, and are crowned. 'I was a poor trembling creature,' shall one say, 'but I was confirmed in my faith and holiness by the gospel of Christ; or I rested on a naked promise and found support, because Christ was there, and he shall have the glory of it.' In him are all the promises yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of the Father," 2 Cor. i. 20, 21, 22. And the Son shall share in this glory, for he died to ratify these promises, and he lives to fulfil them.

'Oh what an almighty arm is this (shall the believer say) that has borne up so many thousands of poor sinking crea-

tures, and lifted their heads above the waves !' The spark of grace that lived many years in a flood of temptations, and was not quenched, shall then shine bright, to the glory of Christ who kindled and maintained it. When we have been brought through all the storms and threatening seas, and yet the raging waves have been forbid to swallow us up, we shall cry out in raptures of joy and wonder, "What manner of man is this, that the winds and the seas have obeyed him ?"

Then shall it be gloriously evident, that he has conquered Satan, and kept the hosts of hell in chains, when it shall appear that he has made poor, mean, trembling believers, victorious over all the powers of darkness ; for the Prince of 'peace has bruised him under their feet.'

Fifthly, There is more work for our wonder and joy, and more glory for our blessed Lord, when we shall see 'that so many dark and dreadful providences were working together in mercy, for the good of the saints ;' it is because Jesus Christ had the management of them all put in his hand ; and we shall acknowledge "he has done all things well." Rom. viii. 28, "All things have wrought together for good." It is the voice of Christ to every saint in sorrow, "what I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," John xii. 7. I saw not then, saith the Christian, that my Lord was curing my pride, by such a threatening and abasing providence, that he was weaning my heart from sensual delight, by such a sharp and painful wound ; but now I behold things in another light, and give thanks and praises to my divine Physician.

We shall look back upon the hours of our impatience, and be ashamed ; we shall chide the flesh for its old repinings, when we shall stand upon the eternal hills of paradise, and cast our eyes back upon yonder transactions of time, those past ages of complaint and infirmity. We shall then, with pleasure and thankfulness, confess, that the captain of our salvation was much in the right to lead us through so many sufferings and sorrows, and we were much in the wrong to complain of his conduct.

Bear up your spirits then, ye poor afflicted distressed souls, who are wrestling through difficult providences all in the dark. Bear up but a little longer, "he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry ;" he will set all his conduct

in a fair light, and you shall say, 'Blessed be the Lord, and all his government."

Sixthly, 'That heaven should be so well filled out of such a hell of sin and misery as this world is,' shall be another delightful reflection full of wonder and glory. Take a short survey of mankind, how 'all flesh has corrupted its ways' before God, and 'every imagination of the thought of man's heart is only evil, and that continually; there is none righteous, no, not one.' Look round about you and see how iniquity abounds, violence, oppression, pride, lust, sensualities of all kinds, how they reign among the children of men. Religion is lost, and God forgotten in the world; and yet, out of this wretched world, Christ has provided inhabitants for heaven, where 'nothing can enter that defileth.' Look into your own hearts, ye sinners, see what a hell lies there; and ye converts of the grace of Christ, look into your hearts too, and see how many of the seeds of wickedness still lie hid there; how much corruption, and how little holiness; look inward, and wonder that Christ should ever fit you for heaven, by his converting and his sanctifying grace.

Look round the world again, and survey the miseries of this earth; as many calamities as there are creatures, and perhaps ten times more. Who is there on earth without his sorrows? and sometimes a multitude of them meet in one single sufferer. See how toil, and weariness, and disappointment, poverty and sickness, pain, and anguish, and vexation, are distributed through this world, that lies on the borders of hell; see all this, and wonder at the grace of Christ, that has taken a colony out of this miserable world, and made a heaven of it.

We shall, many of us, be a wonder to each other as well as to ourselves, and we shall all review and admire the grace of Christ in and towards us all. Among the rest, there are two sorts of Christians whose salvation shall be a special matter of wonder, and these are the *melancholy* and the *uncharitable*.* The *melancholy* Christian shall

* The word is not used here by our author, in the full extent of its meaning. The *uncharitable* would be as much out of place in heaven, as the sanctified would be in hell. Yet compared to what he ought to be, a truly pious man, through rashness and mistake, may be uncharitable in particular instances; and owing to difference of temperament, knowledge, piety, or habit, pious men are sometimes uncharitable to a blamable extent, not only

wonder that ever such a sinner as himself was brought to heaven; and the *uncharitable* shall wonder how such a sinner as his neighbour came there. The poor doubting melancholy soul, who was full of fears lest he should be condemned, shall then have full assurance that he is elected and redeemed, pardoned and saved, when he sees, hears and feels, the salvation and the glory upon him, within him, and all around him, and he shall admire and adore the grace of God his Saviour. The *narrow-souled* Christian, who said his neighbour would be damned for want of some party notions, or for some lesser failings, shall confess his uncharitable mistake, and shall wonder at the abounding mercy of Christ, which has pardoned those errors in his neighbour, for which he had excommunicated and condemned him. Both these Christians in that day, I mean, the *timorous* and the *censorious*, shall stand at his right hand, as monuments of his surprising grace, who forgave one the defects of his *faith*, and the other his want of *love;* and their souls and their tongues shall join together to rejoice in the Lord, and their spirits shall magnify their God and Redeemer. Christ shall have his due revenue of glory from both, in the hour of their public salvation.

O what honour shall it add to the overflowing mercy of Christ, what joy and wonder to all the saints, to see Paul the persecutor and blasphemer there, and Peter who denied the Lord that bought him, and Mary Magdalene that impure sinner!* See what a foul and shameful catalogue, what children of iniquity are at last made heirs and possessors of heaven, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. The fornicators and idolaters, the thieves and the covetous, the drunkards,

in respect of what they should be, but also compared with others. It is in this comparative sense that the word is used as above.—Ed.

* Tradition has been exceedingly unjust to the character of Mary of Magdala. There is not a vestige of proof in the New Testament, that she ever had been an impure woman. There is evidence of the contrary in the character of her associates; such as Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, Susannah, and other women of respectable station, and of the best character. "She is spoken of," as Dr. Scott says, "rather as one who had been remarkably *afflicted*, than peculiarly *wicked*." She was a wealthy and pious woman, who "ministered to Jesus of her substance," not only while he was living, but also brought spices to embalm him after his death. She was one of those devoted women, who watched our dying Saviour during the whole time of his sufferings on mount Calvary, saw him laid in the tomb, and was the first to whom he was pleased to show himself after he

the revilers, and the extortioners. Such they were in the days of ignorance and heathenism, fit fuel for the fire of hell; and in those circumstances they are utterly excluded 'from the kingdom of God;' but now they find a place in that blessed assembly, and the converting grace of Christ is admired and glorified, that could turn such sinners into saints. O surprising scene of rich salvation, when these Corinthian converts, washed in the blood of Christ, and renewed by his Spirit, shall appear in their white garments of holiness and glory! There is not one sinful creature to be found in all the vast retinue of the holy Jesus. But there are thousands who have been once great criminals, notorious sinners, and have been snatched by the arm of divine love, as 'brands out of the burning.' What an affecting sight will it be, when we shall behold all the members of Christ united to their Head, and complete in glory; and see at the same time, a world of vile sinners doomed to destruction! With what admiration and wonder shall we cry out, "and such were some of these happy ones, but they are sanctified, but they are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," ver. 11. 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to' God our Saviour be eternal honour.

In the *seventh* place, There is another glory and wonder added to this illustrious scene, and gives honour to our blessed Saviour, and that is, 'that so many vigorous, beautiful, and immortal bodies, should be raised at once out of the dust, with all their old infirmities left behind them.' Not one ache or pain, not one weakness or disease, among all the glorified millions. As the Israelites came out of their bondage in Egypt, so shall the army of saints from the prison of the grave, "and not one feeble among them," Psal. cv. 37. This is the work of Christ the Creator and the Healer.

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rose from the dead. I conclude, therefore, with Dr. Clarke, "that the common opinion is a vile slander on the character of one of the best women mentioned in the Gospel of God; and a reproach [by implication] on the character and conduct of Christ and his disciples," to whom a certain degree of imprudence might justly be imputed, if a woman of her supposed character, however reformed, had been numbered among their associates. Far be it from us to ascribe imprudence to Him who is possessed of all the treasures of wisdom; and we would also be as far from giving countenance to the aspersions which blundering tradition casts on the character of any of his faithful followers.—Ed.

Here I might run many sorrowful divisions, and travel over the large and thorny field of sickness and pains that attend human nature, those inborn mischiefs that vex poor Christians in this state of trial and suffering. But these were all buried when the body went to the grave, and they are buried forever ; he that has the keys of death, shall let the bodies of his saints out of prison ; but no gout nor stone, no infirmity nor distemper, no head-ache nor heart-ache, shall ever attend them. The body was 'sown in weakness, but it is raised in power ;' it was 'sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory,' through the power of the second Adam, and his quickening Spirit. 1 Cor. xv. 43, 45. Rom. viii. 11.

Then shall Christ appear to be Sovereign and Lord of death, when such an endless multitude of old and new captives are released at his word, and the grave has restored its prey ; when those bodies which have been turned into dust some thousands of years, and their atoms scattered abroad by the winds of heaven, shall be raised again in glory and dignity, to meet their descending Lord in the air. Surely Jesus in that day shall be acknowledged as a Sovereign of nature, when, at the word of his command, a new creation shall arise, all perfect and immortal.

It will add yet further glory to Christ, when we remember what fruitful seeds of iniquity were lodged in that flesh and blood, which we wore on earth, and which we laid down in the tomb ; and when, at the same time, we survey our glorified bodies, how spiritual, how holy, how happily fitted for the service of glorified souls made perfect in holiness. How did all the saints once complain of 'a law in their members, that warred against the law of their minds, and brought them into bondage to the law of sin ?' But this 'law of sin' is now for ever abolished, this 'bondage' dissolved and broken, and these 'members' all new-created, for 'instruments' of 'righteousness' to serve God in his temple. Holy Paul shall no more 'groan in a sinful tabernacle,' he shall no more complain of that 'flesh wherein no good thing dwelt,' he shall cry out no more, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me ?"

Many and bitter have been the sorrows of a holy soul in this world, because of the perverse dispositions of animal nature and the flesh. But none of the saints in that assembly shall ever feel again the stings of inward envy,

the pricking thorns of peevishness, nor the wild ferments of 'wrath and passion:' none of them shall ever find those 'unruly appetites' which wrought so strongly in their old flesh and blood, and too often overpowered their unwilling souls, those appetites which brought their consciences sometimes under fresh guilt, and filled them with inward reproaches, and agonies of spirit. These evil principles are all destroyed by death, they are lost in the grave, and shall have no resurrection. The new-raised bodies of the righteous in that day, shall be completely obedient to the dictates of their spirits, without any vicious juices to make reluctance, or perverse humours to raise an inward rebellion.* And not only so, but perhaps even our bodies shall have some active holy tendencies, wrought in them so far as corporeal nature can administer, towards the sacred exercises of a glorified saint. A sweet and blessed change indeed! And Jesus who raised these bodies in this beauty of holiness, shall receive the glory of this divine work.

The last instance I shall mention, wherein Christ shall be admired in his saints, is this, 'they shall appear in that day, as so many images of his person, and as so many monuments of the success of his office.'

Is the blessed Jesus a great Prophet, and the Teacher of his church? These are the persons that have learnt his divine doctrine, they have 'heard the joyful sound' of his gospel, and the holy truths of it are copied out in their hearts. These are the disciples of his school; and by his word, and by his Spirit, they have been taught to know God and their Saviour, and they have been trained up in the way to eternal life.

Is Jesus a great 'High Priest, both of sacrifice and intercession?' Behold all these souls, an endless number, puri-

* "Vicious juices," and "perverse humours," may be the causes or effects of *bodily* disease; and disease, together with the habits which sometimes produce it, may make "reluctance," and "raise inward rebellion,"—may try the faith and patience of God's people, and detect the deficiency and feebleness, of their graces, and the strength of their remaining corruptions. But disease in any part of the material frame, is not the cause of moral delinquency. It is the consequence of sin, the evidence that we "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others," or, it may be the occasion of remaining depravity in some way discovering itself; but it would be approximating too much the confines of Gnosticism, to admit the idea that any of the "juices" or "humours" of the body are *morally* "vicious" or "perverse."—Ed.

fied from their defilements by the blood of his cross, washed and made white in that blessed laver, and reconciled to God by his atoning sacrifice. Behold the power of his intercession, in securing millions from the wrath of God, and in procuring for them every divine blessing. He has obtained for each of them grace and glory.

Is Jesus the 'Lord of all things,' and the 'King of his church?' Behold his subjects waiting on him, a numerous and a loyal multitude, who have the laws of their King engraven on their souls. These are the sons and daughters of Adam, whom he has rescued by his power from the kingdom of darkness, and the hands of the devil: he has guarded them from the rage of their malicious adversaries in earth and hell, and brought them safe through all difficulties, to behold the glories of this day, and to celebrate the honours of their King.

Is he the 'Captain of salvation?' See what a blessed army he has listed under his banner of love; and they have followed him through all the dangers of life and time under his conduct. These are the 'chosen, the called, the faithful.' They have sustained many a sharp conflict, many a dreadful battle, and they are at last, 'made more than conquerors through him that has loved them.' They attribute all their victories to the wisdom, the goodness, and the power of their divine Leader: and even stand amazed at their own success against such mighty adversaries. But they fought under the banner, conduct, and influence of the 'Prince of life,' the King of righteousness, who is always victorious, and has a crown in his hand for every conqueror.

Is Jesus the great 'example of his saints?' Behold the virtues and graces of the Son of God, copied out in all his followers. 'As he was, so were they in this world, holy, harmless and undefiled, and separate from sinners.' As he now is, so are they, glorious in holiness, and divinely beautiful, while each of them reflects the image of their blessed Lord, and they appear as wonders to all the beholding world. They 'were unknown' here on earth, even as 'Christ himself was unknown.' This is the day appointed to reveal their works and their graces. Jesus is the 'brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; and all the Sons and daughters of God shall then appear, as so many pictures of the blessed Jesus, drawn by the finger of the eternal Spirit.

And not their souls only, but their glorified bodies also are framed in his likeness. What grace and grandeur dwells in each countenance! 'As thou art,' O blessed Jesus, so shall they be on that day, 'all of them resembling the children of a king!' Vigour and health, beauty and immortality, shine and reign throughout all that blessed assembly. The adopted sons and daughters of God resemble the original and only begotten Son. Christ will have all his brethren and sisters conformed unto his glories, that they may be known to be his kindred, the children of his Father, and that he 'may appear the first-born among many brethren.' When the Son of God breaks open the graves, he forms the dust of his saints, by the model of his own glorious aspect and figure, "and changes their vile bodies into the likeness of his own glorious body, by that power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself," Phil. iii. 21. He shall be admired as the bright *original*, and each of the saints as a fair and glorious *copy*. The various beauties that are dispersed among all that assembly, are summed up and united in himself: 'he is the chiefest of ten thousands, and altogether lovely.' One sun in the firmament can paint his own bright image at once, upon a thousand reflecting glasses, or mirrors of gold. What a dazzling lustre would arise from such a scene of reflections! But what superior and inexpressible glory, above all the powers of similitude and beyond the reach of comparison, shall irradiate the world in that day, when Jesus the Son of righteousness shall shine upon all his saints, and find each of them well prepared to receive this lustre, and to reflect it round the creation; each of them displaying the image of the original Son of God, and confessing all their virtues and graces, all their beauties and glories, both of soul and body, to be nothing else but mere copies and derivations from Jesus, the first and fairest image of the Father!

Use. The doctrines and the works of divine grace are full of wonder and glory. Such is the person and offices of Christ, such are his holy and faithful followers, and such eminently will be the blessed scene at his appearance. In the foregoing part of the discourse, we have briefly surveyed some of those glorious wonders, we now come to consider what *use* may be made of such a theme.

Use 1. It gives us eminently these two lessons of *instruction.*

Lesson 1. 'How mistaken is the judgment of flesh and sense, in the things that relate to Christ and his saints.' The Son of God himself, was abused and scorned by the blind world, they esteemed him as "one smitten of God and unbeloved," and "they saw no beauty nor comeliness in him," Isa. liii. 23. He was poor and despised all his life, and he was doomed to the death of a criminal and a slave. As for the saints they find no more honour or esteem among men than their Lord, they are many times called and counted 'the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things,' 1 Cor. iv. 13. This is the judgment of flesh and sense.

But when the great appointed hour is come, and Jesus shall return from heaven 'with a shout of the arch-angel, and the trump of God,' when he shall call up his saints from their beds of dust and darkness, and make the graves resign those 'prisoners of hope,' when they shall all gather together around their Lord, a bright and numerous army, shining and reflecting the splendours of his presence, how will the judgment of flesh and sense be confounded at once, and reversed with shame? 'Is this the man that was loaded with scandal, that was buffeted with scorn, and scourged and crucified in the land of Judea? Is this the person that hung on the cursed tree, and expired under agonies of pain and sorrow! Amazing sight! how majestic, how divine his appearance! the Son of God, and the king of glory! And are these the men that were made the mockery of the world? that *wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, in dens and caves of the earth?* Surprising appearance! how illustrious! how full of glory!' O that such a meditation might awaken us to judge more by faith.

Lesson 2. The next lesson that we may derive from the text is this, viz. 'One great design of the day of judgment, is to advance and publish the glory of Christ.' He shall some on purpose to 'be glorified in his saints;' the whole creation was made by him and for him; the transactions of Providence, grace and justice, are managed for his honour; and the joyful and terrible affairs of the day of judgment, are designed to display the majesty and the power of Jesus the King, the wisdom and equity of Jesus the Judge, and the grace and truth of Jesus the Saviour. I will grant indeed that the appointment of

this day is partly intended for the glory of Christ, in the 'just destruction of the impenitent,' for he will be glorified in pouring out the vengeance of his Father upon rebellious sinners. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," ver. 7, 8, 9. before my text. But his sweetest and most valuable revenue of glory arises from among his saints.

If the 'messengers of the churches' are called 'the glory of Christ,' with all the weaknesses, and sins, and follies that attend the best of them here, as in 2 Cor. viii. 23, much more shall they be in his *glory* hereafter, when they shall have no spot or blemish found upon them, and when the work of Christ upon their souls has formed and finished them in the perfect beauty of holiness. The saints shall reflect glory on each other, and all of them cast supreme lustre on Christ their head. The people shall be the crown and glory of the minister in that day, and the minister shall be the joy and glory of the people, and both shall be the crown, joy and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Thes. ii. 19, 20. 2 Cor. i. 14. 2 Thes. i. 12. He shall appear high on a throne in the midst of that bright assembly and say, 'Father, these are the sheep that thou hast given me, in the counsels of thine eternal love; all these have I ransomed from hell at the price of my own blood; these have I rescued by my grace, from the dominion of sin and the devil; I have formed them unto holiness and fitted them for heaven: I have kept them by my power through all the dangers of their mortal state, and have brought them safe to thy celestial kingdom. *All thine are mine, and all mine are thine; I was glorified in them* on earth, John xvii. 10, and they are now my everlasting crown and glory.'

Then shall the unknown worlds that never fell, worlds of angels and innocent creatures, and the world of guilty devils and condemned rebels, stand and wonder together at the recovery and salvation Christ has provided for the fallen sons of Adam. They shall stand amazed to see the millions of apostate creatures, the inhabitants of this earthly globe, recovered to their duty and allegiance by the

Son of God going down to hell amongst them ; millions of impure and deformed souls restored to the divine image, and made beautiful as angels, by the grace and spirit of our Lord Jesus. Those spectators shall be filled with admiration and transport, to see such a multitude of criminals pardoned and justified, for the sake of a righteousness which they themselves never wrought, and accepted as righteous in the sight of God, by a covenant of grace unknown to other worlds, and by faith in the great Mediator. They shall wonder to see such an innumerable company of polluted wretches, washed from their sins in so precious a laver as the blood of God's own Son. And he that hung upon the cross as a spectacle of wretchedness at Jerusalem, shall entertain the superior and inferior worlds with the sight of his adorable and divine glories, and the spoils he has brought from the region of death and hell. Thus to 'the principalities and powers in heavenly places, shall be made known by the church *triumphant*, the manifold wisdom,' and the manifold grace of God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, Eph. iii. 10.

But tremble, O ye obstinate and impenitent wretches ! ye sensual sinners ! ye infidels of a Christian name and nation ! Christ will be glorified in you one way or another : if your hearts are not bowed and melted to receive his gospel, you shall be 'punished with everlasting destruction' among those that 'know not God, and obey not the gospel of his Son.'

Tremble, ye sensual and ye profane sons of iniquity, when ye remember this day, when ye shall see the holy souls that ye scorned, with crowns on their heads, and palms in their hands, with the shout of victory and joy on their tongues, and the God-man whom ye despised, and whose grace ye neglected, shining at the head of that bright assembly.

Tremble, ye infidels, ye despisers of the name of a crucified Christ, behold his cross is become a throne, and his crown of thorns a crown of glory. See the man whom ye have scorned and reproached, at the head of millions of angels, and adored by ten thousand times ten thousand saints, while wicked princes and captains, armies and nations of sinners, wait their doom from his mouth, nor dare hope for a word of his mercy. O make haste, and come and be reconciled to him, and to God by him, that ye may

belong to that blessed assembly, that ye may bear a part in the triumphs of that day, and that Christ may be glorified in your recovery from the very borders of damnation.

This thought leads me to the next *use*.

II. This discourse gives 'rich encouragement to the greatest sinners to hope for mercy, and to the weakest saints to hope for victory and salvation.' Such sort of subjects of the grace of Christ, shall yield him some of the brightest rays of glory at the last day. Yet, sinners, let me charge you here never to hope for this happiness without solemn repentance, and an entire change of heart unto holiness; for an unholy soul would be a fearful blemish in that assembly, and a disgrace to our Lord Jesus. Christians, I would charge you also never to hope for the happiness of this day, without battle and conquest; for all the members of that assembly must be overcomers: but where there is a hearty desire and longing after grace and salvation, let not the worst of sinners despair, nor the weakest believer let go his hope, for it is such as you and I are, in whom Christ will be magnified in that day.

Believe this, O thou humbled and convinced sinner! who complainest that thy heart is hard, though thou wouldest fain repent and mourn; who fearest that the bonds of thy corruptions are so strong that they shall never be broken; believe that the sovereign grace of Christ has designed to exalt itself in the sanctification of such unholy souls as thou art, and in melting such hard hearts as thine. And thou poor trembling soul that wouldest fain trust in a Saviour, but art afraid, because of the greatness of thy guilt, and thine abounding iniquities, believe this, that 'where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded.' It is from the bringing such sinners as thou art to heaven, that the choicest revenues of glory shall arise to our Lord Jesus Christ, and thy acclamations of joy and honour to the Saviour, shall perhaps be loudest in that day, 'when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.'

Read 1 Tim. i. 13, 14, 15, and 16, and see there what an account the great Apostle gives of his own conversion; "I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, yet I obtained mercy; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith, and love, which is in Jesus Christ." Now I am sent to publish and preach to blas-

phemers and persecutors, that "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

Turn to another text, ye feeble believers, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10, and there you shall find the same Apostle a convert and a Christian, but too weak to conflict with the messenger of Satan that buffeted him, nor able to release himself from that sore temptation that lay heavy upon him: but having received a word from Christ that his 'grace was sufficient,' and that his 'strength was' to shine 'perfect in glory in the midst of our weakness,' the Apostle encourages himself to a joyful hope. Now, says he, I can even "glory in my infirmities, (so far as they are without sin,) that the power of Christ may rest upon me; when I am weak" in myself, "I am strong" in the Lord.

Are not the most diseased patients the chief honours of the physician that hath healed them? And must not these appear eminently in that day, when he displays to the sight of the world the noblest monuments of his healing power? When cripples and invalids gain the victory over mighty enemies, is not the skill and conduct of their leader most admired? You are the persons then in whom Christ will be glorified, be of good cheer, receive his offered grace, and wait for his salvation.

III. The next *use* I shall make of this discourse, is to draw a 'word of advice' from it. 'Learn to despise those honours and ornaments in this world, in which Christ shall have no share in the world to come.' I do not say, 'cast them all away,' for many things are needful in this life, that can have no immediate regard to the other; but 'learn to despise them,' and set light by them, because they reach no further than time, and shall be forgotten in eternity. Never put the higher esteem on yourselves or your neighbours, because of the gay glitterings of silk or silver: nor let these employ your eyes and your thoughts in the time of worship, when the things of the future world should fill up all your attention; nor let them entertain your tongues in your friendly visits, so as to exclude the discourse of divine ornaments and the glorious appearance of our Lord Jesus.

When I am to put on my best attire, let me consider, if I am hung round with jewels and gold, these must perish before that solemn day, or melt in the last great burning, they can add no beauty to me in that assembly. If I put on love and faith, and humility, I shall shine in these hereafter, and Christ shall have some rays of glory from them. O may your souls and mine be drest in those graces which are ornaments of great price in the sight of God!" 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4, such as may command the respect of angels, and reflect honour upon Christ in that solemnity!

I confess we dwell in flesh and blood, and human nature in the best of us is too much impressed by things sensible. When we see a train of human pomp and grandeur, and long ranks of shining garments and equipage, it is ready to dazzle our eyes, and attract our hearts. Vain pomp, and poor equipage, all this, when compared with the triumph of our blessed Lord, at his appearance with an endless army of his holy ones; where every saint shall be vested, (not in silks and gold,) but in robes of refined light, out-shining the sun, such as Christ himself wore in the mount of transfiguration. Millions of suns in one firmament of glory. Think on that day and the illustrious retinue of our Lord: think on that splendor that shall attract the eyes of heaven and earth, shall confound the proud sinner, and astonish the inhabitants of hell. Such a meditation as this will cast a dim shadow over the brightest appearances of a court, or a royal festival; it will spread a dead colouring over all the painted vanities of this life; it will damp every thought of rising ambition and earthly pride, and we shall have but little heart to admire or wish for any of the vain shows of mortality. Methinks every gaudy scene of the present life, and all the gilded honours of courts and armies, should grow faint, and fade away and vanish, at the meditation of this illustrious appearance.

IV. This text will give us also two hints of *caution.*

First, 'You that are rich in this world, or wise, or mighty, dare not ridicule nor scoff at those poor weak Christians, in whom Christ shall be admired and glorified in the last day.' You that fancy you have any advantages of birth or beauty, of mind or body here on earth, dare not make a jest of your poor pious neighbour that wants them, for he is one of those persons whom Christ

calls his *glory*, and he himself has given you warning, lest you incur his resentment on this account, Matth. xviii. 6, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Perhaps the good man has some blemish in his outward form, or it may be his countenance is dejected, or his mien and figure awkward and uncomely; perhaps his garments sit wrong and unfashionable upon him, or it may be they hang in tatters: the motions of his body perhaps are ungraceful, his speech improper, and his deportment simple and unpolished; but he has shining graces in his soul, in which Christ shall be admired in the last day, and how darest thou make him thy laughing-stock? Wilt thou be willing to hear thy scornful jest repeated again at that day, when the poor derided Christian has his robes of glory on, and the Judge of all shall acknowledge him for one of his favourites?

The *second* hint of caution is this, 'You that shall be the glory of Christ in that day, dare not do any thing that may dishonour him now.' Walk answerable to your character and your hope, nor indulge the least sinful defilement. Say within yourselves, 'Am I to make one in that splendid retinue of my Lord, where every one must appear in robes of holiness, and shall I spot my garments with the flesh? When I am provoked to anger and indignation, let me say, doth wrath and bluster become a follower and an attendant of the meek and peaceful Jesus? When I am tempted to pride and vanity of mind, will this be a beauty, or a blemish, to that assembly that shines in glorious humility? Or perhaps I am wavering, and ready to yield, and become a captive to some foolish temptation; but how then can I expect a place in that holy triumph, which is appointed for none but conquerors? And how shall I be able to look my blessed General in the face on that day, if I prove a coward under his banner, and abandon my profession of strict holiness, at the demand of a sinful and threatening world?'

V. The last *use* I shall make of the text, is matter of 'consolation and joy' to two sorts of Christians.

First, 'To the poor, mean, and despised followers of Christ,' and in whom Christ himself is despised by the ungodly world; read my text, and believe that in you,

Christ shall be glorified and admired, when, with a million of angels, he shall descend from heaven, and make his last appearance upon earth; mean as you are in your own esteem, because of your ignorance and your weakness in this world, you shall be one of the glories of Christ in the world to come: little and despicable as you are in the esteem of proud sinners, they shall behold your Lord exalted on his throne, and you sitting among the honours at his right hand, while they shall rage afar off, and gnash their teeth at your glory. When the eye of faith is open, it can spy this bright hour at a distance, and bid the mourning Christian rejoice in hope.

Secondly, There is *comfort* also in my text, to those 'who mourn for the dishonour of Christ in the world;' those lively members of the mystical body who sympathize with the blessed Head, under all the reproaches that are cast upon him and his gospel, who groan under the load of scandal that is thrown upon Christ in an infidel age, as though it were personally thrown upon themselves. It is matter of lamentation indeed, that there are but few of this sort of Christians in our day, few that love our Lord Jesus with such tenderness; but if such there be among you, open your eyes, and look forward to this glorious day. This day, to which Enoch, the first of all the prophets, and John, the last of all the Apostles, direct our faith. Read their own words, Jude 14, 15. Rev. i. 7. "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodlily committed, and of all the hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Bear up your hearts, ye mourners, and support your hopes with the promise of our Lord. "Again, a little while and ye shall see me;" ye shall see "the Son of man sitting on the throne of his glory," Matt. xxv. 31. 'Then shall your heart rejoice' in his honours and in your own, and this "joy no man taketh from you," John xvi. 19, 22. And while he repeats this promise with his last words in the Bible, 'surely I come quickly,' let every soul of us echo to the voice of our beloved, *Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus.*

DISCOURSE V.

THE WRATH OF THE LAMB.

REV. vi. 15, 16, 17. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free-man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand.

WHEN some terrible judgment, or execution of divine vengeance is denounced against an age or a nation, it is sometimes described in the language of prophecy, by a resemblance to the last and great judgment-day, when all mankind shall be called to account for their sins, and the just and final indignation of God shall be executed upon obstinate and unrepenting criminals; the discourse of our Saviour in the xxivth of Matthew, is an eminent example of this kind, where the destruction of the Jewish nation is predicted, together with the final judgment of the world, in such uniform language, and similar phrases of speech, that it is difficult to say whether both these scenes of vengeance run through the whole discourse, or which part of the discourse belongs to the one and which to the other. The same manner of prophecy appears in this text.

Learned interpreters suppose these words to foretell the universal consternation which was found among the heathen idolaters and persecutors of the Church of Christ, when Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, was raised to the throne of Rome, and became governor of the world.

But whether they hit upon the proper application of this prophecy or not, yet still it is pretty evident, that this scene of terror is borrowed from the last judgment, which will eminently appear to be the "day of wrath," as it is called, Rom. ii. 5. It is the great day of divine indignation, in so eminent a manner, that all the tremendous desolations of kingdoms and people, from the crea-

tion of the world, to the consummation of all things, shall be but as shadows of that day of terror and vengeance.

I shall therefore consider these words at present, as they contain a solemn representation of that last glorious and dreadful day; and here I shall enquire particularly, (1.) 'Who are the persons whose aspect and appearance shall then be so dreadful to sinners? (2.) How comes the wrath which discovers itself at that time to be so formidable? and (3.) How vain will all the shifts and hopes of sinners be, in that dreadful day, to avoid the wrath and vengeance.'

First, Who are the persons that appear clothed in so much terror?

It is he that "sits upon the throne, and the Lamb." It is God the Father of all, the great and Almighty Creator, the supreme Lord and Governor of the world, and the Lamb of God, i. e. our Lord JESUS CHRIST, his Son, dwelling in human nature, to whom the judgment of the world is committed, and by whom the Father will introduce the terrible and the illustrious scenes of that day, and manage the important and eternal affairs of it. It is by these names that the Apostle John, in this prophetical book, describes *God the Father* and his *Son Jesus*. Rev. iv. 10. and v. 6.—13.

If it be enquired, why God the Father is described as the person 'sitting on the throne,' this is plainly agreeable to the other representations of him throughout the Scripture, where he is described as first and supreme in authority, as sitting on the throne of majesty on high, as denoting and commissioning the Lord Jesus, his well-beloved Son, to act for him, and as placing him on his throne, to execute his works of mercy or vengeance. Rev. iii. 21. "He that overcometh shall sit down with me on my throne," saith our Saviour, "even as I have overcome, and am set down with the Father on his throne." John v. 22, 27. "The Father hath committed all judgment into the hands of the Son." It is true, the Godhead or divine essence is but one, and it is the same Godhead which belongs to the Father that dwells in the Son, and in this respect "Christ and the Father are one, he is in the Father, and the Father in him," John x. 30, 38; yet the Father is constantly exhibited in Scripture, with peculiar characters of prime authority, and the Son is represented as re-

ceiving all from the Father.* John v. 19, 20, 23, 26, 27.

If it be farther enquired, 'why Christ is called the Lamb of God,' I shall not pursue those many fine metaphors and similes, in which the wit and fancy of men have run a long course on this subject; but shall only mention these two things.

1. He is called the Lamb, from the innocence of his behaviour, the quietness and meekness of his disposition and conduct in the world. The character of Jesus, among men, was peaceful, and harmless, and patient of injuries; "when he was reviled, he reviled not again, but was led as a Lamb to the slaughter," with submission, and without revenge. This resemblance appears, and is set forth to view in several Scriptures, wherein he is compared to this gentle creature. Acts viii. 32. 1 Pet. ii. 23.

2. He was called the Lamb, because he was appointed a sacrifice for the sins of men; John i. 29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, "You were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot." It was a lamb that was ordained for the constant daily sacrifice among the Jews, morning and evening, to typify the constant and everlasting influence of the atonement made by the death of Christ. Heb. x. 11, 12. It was a lamb which was sacrificed at the passover, and on which the families of Israel feasted, to commemorate their redemption from the slavery of Egypt, and to typify Christ who is "our passover, who was sacrificed for us," and for whose sake the destroying angel spares all that trust in him. 1 Cor. v. 7.

But will a *lamb* discover such dreadful wrath? Has the Lamb of God such indignation in him? Can the meek, the compassionate, the merciful Son of God, put on such terrible forms and appearances? Are his tender mercies vanished quite away, and will he renounce the kind aspect, and the gentle language of a lamb for ever?

To this I answer, that the various glories and offices of our blessed Lord require a variety of human metaphors and emblems to represent them. He was a lamb, full of gentleness, meekness, and compassion, to invite and en-

*All the passages of Scripture which ascribe inferiority or dependence to the Son, speak of him in his mediatorial character, or have reference to his human nature.—Ed.

courage sinful perishing creatures, to accept of divine mercy: but he has now to deal with obstinate and rebellious criminals, who renounce his Father's mercy, and resist all the gentle methods of his own grace and salvation: and he is sent by the Father to punish those rebellions; but he is named 'the Lamb of God' still, to put the rebels in mind what gentleness and compassion they have affronted and abused, and to make it appear that their guilt is utterly inexcusable.

Let us remember, Christ is now a Lamb, raised to the throne in heaven, and furnished and armed 'with seven eyes and seven horns,' *with perfect knowledge and perfect power*, to govern the world, to vindicate his own honour, and to avenge himself upon his impenitent and obstinate enemies, Rev. v. 5, 6. Here the Lamb will assume the name of the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" also, and he must act in different characters, according to the persons he has to deal with.

The *second* general question which we are to consider, is, 'How comes the wrath of that great day to be so terrible?'

I answer in general, because it is not only the 'wrath of God,' but of 'the Lamb.' It is the wrath that is manifested for the affronts of divine authority, and the abuse of divine mercy: it is wrath that is awakened by the contempt of the laws of God, written in the books of nature and Scripture, and for the contempt of his love revealed in the Gospel by Jesus Christ.

It is proper to observe here, that the 'wrath of God,' and the 'wrath of the Lamb,' are not to be conceived as exactly the same, for it is the wrath of the Son of God in his human nature exalted, as well as the displeasure of God the Father. It is the righteous and holy resentment of the man Jesus, awakened and let loose against rebellious creatures that have broken all the rules of his Father's government, and have refused all the proposals of his Father's grace. It is the wrath of the highest, the greatest, and the best of creatures, joined to the wrath of an offended Creator.* But let us enter a little into particulars.

* Here let it be observed, that when the holy Scripture speaks of the *wrath and indignation of the blessed God*, we are not to understand it as though God were subject to such passions or affections of nature, as we feel fermenting or working within ourselves when our anger rises. But because

1. It is righteous wrath, and just and deserved vengeance, that 'arises from the clearest discoveries of the love of God neglected, and the sweetest messages of divine grace refused.' All the former discoveries of the love of God to men, both in nature and providence, as well as by divine revelation, whether in the days of the Patriarchs, or in the days of Moses and the Jews, were far inferior to the grace which was revealed by Jesus Christ; and therefore the sin of rejecting it is greater in proportion, and the punishment will be more severe. "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward,—how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, as THIS which began to be spoken by our Lord?" Heb. ii. 2, 3.

Moses had many true discoveries of grace made to him and entrusted with him, for sinful men. But the Scripture saith, John i. 17, "The law came by Moses, and grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," i. e. in such superabundance, as though grace and truth had never appeared in the world before. The forgiving mercy of God, under the veil of ceremonies and sacrifices, and the mediation of Christ, under the type of the high priest, was but a dark and imperfect discovery, in comparison of the free, the large, the full forgiveness, which is brought to us by the gospel of Christ. Learn this doctrine at large, from Heb. x. 1.—14. This is amazing mercy, astonishing grace, and the despisers of it will deserve to perish with double destruction, for they wink their eyes against clearer light and reject the offers of more abounding love.

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the justice or rectoral wisdom of God inclines him to bring natural evil, pain or sorrow, upon those who are obstinately guilty of moral evil or sin, and to treat them as anger or wrath inclines men to treat those that have offended them; therefore the Scripture, speaking after the manner of men, calls it, the *wrath and indignation of God.*

And it is hard to say, whether or no the *wrath of the Lamb*, i. e. of the man *Christ Jesus*, in whom the Godhead dwells, be any thing more than the calm, dispassionate, rectoral wisdom of the human nature of *Christ*, inclining him to punish rebellious and impenitent sinners, in conformity to the will of God his Father, or in concurrence with the Godhead which dwells in him.—WATTS.

[Jesus is not to be viewed as *merely man*, in discharging the functions of Mediator. We might as well imagine a human body to act without a soul, as Christ to act separately from the divine nature. In his Person the two natures are inseparably united. The "wrath of the Lamb" is the execution of his just judgment upon sinners.—ED.]

2. It is wrath that is 'awakened by the most precious and most expensive methods of salvation slighted and undervalued.' Well may God say to Christian nations, especially to *Great-Britain*, who sits under the daily sound of this gospel, 'What could I have done more for you than I have done?' Isa. v. 4. 'I have sent my own Son, the son of my bosom, the son of my eternal love, to take flesh and blood upon him, that he might be able to die in your stead who were guilty rebels, and deserved to die: I have given him up to the insults and injuries of men, to the temptations, the buffetings, and rage of devils, to the stroke of the sword of my justice, to the cursed death of the cross for you; here is heaven and salvation purchased for man, with the dearest and most valuable life in all the creation, with the richest blood that ever ran in the veins of a creature, with the life and blood of the Son of God; and yet you refused to receive and accept of this salvation, procured at so immense a price. I called you to partake of this invaluable blessing freely, "without money and without price," and yet you slighted all these offers of mercy; what remains but that my wrath should kindle against you in the hottest degree, and fill your souls with exquisite anguish and misery; you have refused to accept of a covenant which was sealed with the blood of my own Son, which was confirmed by miraculous operations of my own Spirit; you have valued your sinful pleasures, and the trifles of this vain world, above the blood of my Son, and the life of your souls: it is divinely proper that divine vengeance should be your portion, who have rejected such rich treasures of divine love.' Heb. x. 28—31. 'He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said vengeance belongeth unto me, I will repay, saith the Lord.'

3. It is wrath that 'must avenge the affronts and injuries done to the prime minister of God's government, and the chief messenger of his mercy.' All the patriarchs, and the prophets, and angels themselves, were but 'servants' to bring messages of divine grace to men: and some

of them in awful forms and appearances, represented the authority of God too. But the 'Son of God' is the prime minister of his government, and the noblest ambassador of his grace, and the chief deputy or vicegerent in his Father's kingdom. See Heb. i. 1, 2. Psal. ii. 6, 9, 12. His Father's glory and grandeur, compassion and love, are most sublimely exhibited in the face of Christ his Son, and God will not have his highest and fairest image disgraced and affronted, without peculiar and signal vengeance.

The great God will vindicate the honours of his Son Jesus, in the infinite destruction of a rebellious and unbelieving world: and the Son himself hath wrath, and just resentment; he will vindicate his own authority, and his commission of grace. He hath a rod of iron put into his hands, as well as a sceptre of mercy, and with this rod will he break to pieces rebellious nations. Rev. iii. latter end. It is not fit that the first minister of the empire of the King of heaven, and the brightest image of his majesty and of his love, should appear always in the character of a Lamb, a meek and unresenting creature. He will put on the Lion when his commission of grace is ended: he is the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah,' Rev. v. 5, and will 'rend the caul of the heart' of those unrepenting sinners, who have resisted his authority and abused his love.

And how will the wrath of the Lamb of God penetrate the soul of sinners with intense anguish, when the meek and the compassionate Jesus, shall be commissioned and constrained to speak the language of resentment and divine indignation?

'Did you not hear of me, sinners, in yonder world, which lies weltering in flames? Did you not read of me in the gospel of my grace? Did you not learn my character and my salvation in the ministrations of my word? Were you not told that I was appointed to be the Saviour of a lost world, and a minister of divine mercy to men? And was there not abundant evidence of it by miracles and prophecies? Were you not told that I was exalted after my sufferings to the right hand of God, on purpose to "bestow repentance and remission of sins?" Acts. v. 31. And were you not informed also, that I had a "rod of iron" given me to dash rebels to death? Psal. ii. What is the reason you never came to me, or submitted to my government, or accepted of my grace? Did you never

hear of the threatenings that stood like drawn swords against those who wilfully refuse this mercy? Did you think these were mere bugbears, mere sounding words to fright children with, and harmless thunder that would never blast you? Did you think these flashes of wrath in my word, were such sort of lightnings as you might safely play with, and flame that would never burn? What punishments think you, do you deserve, *first* for the abuse of my authority, and *then* for the wilful and obstinate refusal of my grace? Is it not divinely fit and proper, my wrath should awake against such heinous criminals? Where is any proper object for my resentment, if you are not made objects of it? Take them, angels, bind them hand and foot, and cast them into utter darkness. Let them be thrown headlong into the prison of hell, where fire and brimstone burn unquenchably, where light, and peace, and hope can never come. Let them be crushed with the rod of iron, which the Father hath put into my hands, as the first minister of his kingdom, as the avenger of his despised grace.'

4. It is a wrath, that is 'excited by a final and utter rejection of the last proposals of divine love.' When mercy was offered to men by the blessed God at first, the discoveries were more dark and imperfect; there were still further discoveries to be made in following ages. Therefore the crime and guilt of sinners in those former days, was much less than the crime and guilt of those who reject this last proposal of mercy. There is no further edition of the covenant of grace, for those who refuse this offer. Those who neglect Christ as he is set forth in the gospel, to be a sacrifice for sin, "there remains no more sacrifice for them, but a certain fearful expectation of vengeance and fiery indignation, which shall consume the adversary." Heb. x. 26, 28.

All the former dispensations of grace are contained eminently and completed in this dispensation of the gospel. God can send no greater messenger than his own Son, and he concludes and finishes the whole scene and period of grace, with the gospel of Christ. There remains nothing but wrath to the uttermost for those who have abused this last offer of mercy. This was exemplified in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jews, a little after they had put Christ to death, and rejected the salvation which he

proposed ; and this wrath will be more terribly glorified in the final destruction of every sinner that wilfully rejects the glad tidings of this salvation.

5. It is such wrath, as 'arises from the patience of God, tired and worn out by the boldest iniquities of men, and by a final perseverance in their rebellions.' It is the character and glory of God to be "long-suffering, and slow to anger." Exod. xxxiv. 6. "The Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth ;" and Jesus his Son, is the minister of this his patience, and the intercessor for this delay of judgment and vengeance. He is represented as interceding one year after another, for the reprieve of obstinate sinners, and at his intercession, God the Father 'waits to be gracious :' but God will not wait and delay, and keep silence for ever, nor will Jesus for ever plead. Psal. l. 1, 3, 21, 22. "Consider this ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." God will say then to obstinate sinners, as he did to the Jews of old, Jer. xv. 5, 6. "I will stretch out my hand against thee and destroy thee, I am weary of repenting ;" and even the abused patience of Jesus the Saviour, shall turn into fury, when the 'day of recompence' shall come, and the "day of vengeance which is in his heart," Isa. lxiii. 1, 4.

O let each of us consider, 'How long have I made the grace of God wait on me ? How many messages of peace and pardon have I neglected ? How many years have I delayed to accept of this salvation, and made Jesus wait on an impenitent rebel with the commission of mercy in his hand, while I have refused to receive it ? Let my soul be this day awakened to lay hold of the covenant of grace, to submit to the gospel of Christ, lest to-morrow the days of his commission of mercy toward me expire, lest the patience of God be finished, lest the abused love of a Saviour turn into fury, and nothing remain for me, but unavoidable destruction.'

6. It is a sentence of divine wrath, which 'shall be attended with the fullest conviction of sinners, and self-condemnation in their own consciences.' This doubles the sensations of divine wrath, and enhances the anguish of the criminal to a high degree.

This final unbelief and rejection of grace, is a sin against so much light and so much love, that however men cheat

their consciences now, and charm them into silence, yet at the last great day their own consciences shall be on the side of the Judge, when he pronounces wrath and damnation upon them. What infinite terrors will shake the soul, when there is not one of its own thoughts that can speak peace within? When all its own inward powers, shall echo to the sentence of the Judge, and acknowledge the justice and equity of it forever.

O who can express the agonies of pain and torture, when the impenitent sinner shall be awakened into such reflections as these? 'I was placed in a land of light and knowledge; the light of the gospel of grace shone all around me; but I winked my eyes against the light, and now I am plunged into utter and eternal darkness; I was convinced often that I was a sinner, and in danger of death and hell, I was convinced of the truth of the gospel, and the all-sufficiency of the salvation of Christ; but I loved the vanities of this life, I followed the appetites of the flesh, and the delusive charms of a tempting world, I delayed to answer to the voice of Providence and the voice of mercy, the voice of the gospel inviting me to this salvation, and the voice of Christ requiring me to be saved. My own heart condemns me with ten thousand reproaches: how righteous is God in his indignation! how just is the resentment of the Lamb of God in this day of his wrath! What clear and convincing and dreadful equity attends the sentence of my condemnation, and doubles the anguish of my soul!'

7. It is such wrath as 'shall be executed immediately and eternally, without one hour reprieve, and without the least hope of mercy, and that through all the ages to come.' For though Jesus is the Mediator between God and man, to reconcile those to God who have broken his law, there is no mediator appointed to reconcile those sinners to Christ, when they have finally resisted the grace of his gospel. There is no blood nor death that can atone, for the final rejection of the blood of this dying Saviour. If we resist Jesus Christ the Lord, and his atonement, and his sacrifice, his gospel, and his salvation, there remains no more atonement for us. Let us consider each of these circumstances apart, and dwell a little on these terrors, that our hearts may be affected with them.

(1.) This 'wrath shall be executed immediately,' for the time of reprieve is come to an end. Here divine wisdom

and justice have set the limits of divine patience, and they reach no further.

(2.) It is 'wrath that shall be executed without mercy,' because the day and hour of mercy is for ever finished. That belongs only to this life. The day of grace is gone for ever. "He that once made them, will now have no mercy upon them; and he that formed them will shew them no favour," Isa. xxvii. 11. The very mercy of the Mediator, the compassion of the Lamb of God, is turned into wrath and fury. The Lamb himself has put on the form of a Lion, and there is no redeemer or advocate to speak a word for them who have finally rejected Jesus the only Mediator, worn out the age of his pity, and provoked his wrath as well as his Father's.

(3.) It is 'wrath without end,' for their souls are immortal, their bodies are raised to an immortal state, and their whole nature being sinful and miserable, and immortal, they must endure a wretched and miserable immortality. This is the representation of the book of God, even of the New Testament, and I have no commission from God, either to soften these words of terror, or to shorten the term of their misery.

REMARKS ON THIS DISCOURSE.

Remark 1. 'What a wretched mistake is it to imagine the great God is nothing else but Mercy,' and Jesus Christ 'is nothing else but love and salvation.' It is true, God has more mercy than we can imagine, his love is boundless in many of its exercises, and Jesus his Son, who is the image of the Father, is the fairest image of his love and grace. His compassions have "heights and depths, and lengths and breadths in them, that pass all our knowledge," Eph. iii. 18. But God is an universal Sovereign, a wise and righteous Governor. There is majesty with him as well as grace; and 'Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings; he bears the image of his Father's justice, as well as of his Father's love; otherwise, he could not be the full "brightness of his glory, nor the express image of his person."

And besides, the Father hath armed him with powers of divine vengeance, as well as with powers of mercy and salvation. Psal. ii. 9. He has put 'the rod of iron' into his hand,

"to dash the nations like a potter's vessel." Rev. ii. 27. and xix. 13. He is the "elect and precious corner stone laid in Zion," 1 Pet. ii. 6. But he is a stone that "will bruise those who stumble at him," and "those on whom he shall fall, he will grind them to powder," Matth. xxi. 42. He is a Lamb and a Lion too. He can suffer at Jerusalem and mount Calvary, with silence, 'and not open his mouth;' and he can roar from heaven with overspreading terror, and shake the world with the sound of his anger. See that his mercy be not abused.

Remark 2. 'The day of Christ's patience makes haste to an end.' Every day of neglected grace hastens on the hour of his wrath and vengeance. Sinners waste their months and years in rebellion against his love, while he waits months and years to be gracious; but Christ is all-wise, and he knows the proper period of long-suffering, and the proper moment to let all his wrath and resentment loose, on obstinate and unreclaimable sinners. O may every one of our souls awake to faith and repentance, to religion and righteousness, to hope and salvation, before this day of our peace be finished and gone for ever! Psal. ii. 12. "Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." There was once a season when he saw the nation of the Jews, and the people of Jerusalem, wasting the proposals of his love; they let their day of mercy pass away unimproved, and he foretold their destruction with tears in his eyes. Luke xix. 41, 42. "He beheld the city and wept over it;" alas, for the inhabitants who would not be saved. He was then a messenger of salvation, and clothed with pity to sinners, but in the last great day of his wrath, there is no place for these tears of compassion, no room for pity or forgiveness.

Remark 3. 'When we preach terror to obstinate sinners, we may preach Jesus Christ as well as when we preach love and salvation, for he is the minister of his Father's government both in vengeance and in mercy.' The Lamb hath wrath as well as grace, and he is to be feared as well as to be trusted; and he must be represented under all the characters of dignity to which he is exalted, that 'knowing the terrors of the Lord,' as well as the compassion of the Saviour, 'we may persuade sinful men to accept of salvation and happiness.'

DISCOURSE VI.

THE VAIN REFUGE OF SINNERS: OR A MEDITATION ON THE ROCKS NEAR TUNBRIDGE-WELLS; 1729.

Rev. vi. 15, 16 17. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, &c. hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the rocks and mountains, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

In the former discourse on this text, we have taken a survey of these two persons and their characters, God and the Lamb, whose united wrath spreads so terrible a scene through the world at the great judgment-day; we have also inquired, and found sufficient reasons, why the anger and justice of God should be so severe against the sinful sons and daughters of men, who have wilfully broken his law, and refused the grace of his gospel; and why the indignation of the Son of God should be superadded to all the terrors of his Father's vengeance.

We are now come to the *third* and last general head of discourse, and that is to consider, 'how vain will all the refuges and hopes of sinners be found in that dreadful day, when God and the Lamb shall join to manifest their wrath and indignation against them.'

These hopes, and shifts, and refuges of rebellious and guilty creatures, are represented by a noble image and description in my text: "They shall call to the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them, and to cover them from the face of him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." As this address to mountains and to rocks appears to be but a vain hope in extreme distress, when a feeble and helpless criminal is pursued by a swift and mighty avenger, so vain and fruitless shall all the hopes of sinners be, to escape the just indignation and sentence of their Judge. In order to shew the vanity of all the refuges and shifts to which sinners shall betake themselves in that

day, let us spread abroad this sacred description of them in a paraphrase under the following heads.

1. Let us consider the 'rocks and mountains, as vast and mighty created beings, of huge figure, and high appearance, whose aid is sought in the last extremity of distress;' and what is this but calling upon creatures to help them against their Creator? What is it but flying to creatures to deliver and save them, when their offended God resolves to punish? A vain refuge indeed, when God, the Almighty Maker of all things, and Jesus his Son, by whom all things were made, shall agree to arise and go forth against them, in their robes of judgment, and with their artillery of vengeance! What created being dares interpose in that hour to shelter or defend a condemned criminal? What high and mighty creature is able to afford the least security or protection?

The princes of the earth, and the captains, the kings, and heroes, and conquerors, with all their millions of armed men, are not able to lift a hand, for the defence of one sinner against the anger of God and the Lamb. They themselves shall quake and shiver at the tremendous sight, and they shall fly into the holes of the rocks like mere cowards, and shall join their outcries with the poor and the slave, entreating the rocks and mountains to befriend them with shelter and safety.

Not the highest mountains, not the hardest or the strongest rocks, not the most exalted or most powerful persons, or things in nature can defend, when the God of nature resolves to destroy. When HE who is higher than the highest, and stronger than the strongest, shall pronounce destruction upon rebels, what creature can speak deliverance?

The rocks and the mountains obey their Maker, they shiver in pieces at the word of his wrath, and will yield no relief to criminals: but man, rebellious man, disobeys his Maker, and calls to the rocks and mountains to protect him. Vain hope, O sinner, to make the most exalted creatures your friends, when God the Creator is your enemy. These inanimate things have never learnt disobedience to their Maker, and rather than screen a rebel from his deserved judgments, they will offer themselves as instruments of divine vengeance.

2. *Rocks* and *mountains* in their *clifts*, and *dens*, and *caverns*, are sometimes considered as 'places of secresy

and concealment.' My text tells us, that 'kings and mighty men, the rich and the free man, as well as the poor and the slave, hid themselves in dens, and in the rocks of the mountains.' They hoped there might be some secret corner, whose thick shadows and darkness were sufficient to hide them, where the Judge might not spy or find them out. Vain hope for sinners to hide in the holes of the rocks, and the deepest caverns of the mountains, to escape the notice of that God, who is all eye and all ear, and present at once in every place of earth and heaven! Foolish expectation indeed, to avoid the notice of the Son of God, "whose eyes are as a flame of fire," and shoot through the earth and its darkest caves.

Read the 139th Psalm, O sinner! and then think if it be possible to flee from the eye of God, and to hide thyself in the clefts of the rock, where his hand shall not find thee.—He has already 'beset thee behind and before,' and his hand already compasses thee round about in all thy paths. Darkness itself cannot cover thee; 'the night shines as the day' before him, and scatters light round about the criminal that would hide himself from the wrath of God. Ask Jeremy the prophet, and he shall tell thee, that "none can hide himself in secret places where God shall not see him, the God who fills heaven and earth," Jer. xxiii. 4. He shall hunt obstinate sinners from every mountain, and out of the holes of the rocks; for his eyes are upon all their ways, neither their persons, nor their iniquities, can be hid from him.

And, as you can never conceal yourselves from the sight and notice of the Judge, so neither can you turn your eyes away from him. You must behold his face in vengeance, and endure the distressing sight. The rays of his Majesty, in the day of his wrath, shall strike through all the crannies of the darkest den, and pierce the deepest shade. "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up they will not see; but they shall see and be ashamed,' Isa. xxvi. 10. And the face of the Lamb must be seen in all its unknown terrors, Rev. i. 7. "Behold, he comes in the clouds, and every eye shall see him:" the guilty creature, and the divine Avenger, shall meet eye to eye, though the creature has hid himself under rocks and mountains.

3. These 'rocks and mountains' are designed to represent, not only concealment and darkness by their holes

and caverns, but they are known 'bulwarks of defence,' and 'places of security and shelter, by reason of their strength and thickness.' When the prophet would express the safety of the man who practises righteousness in a vicious age, Isa. xxxiii. 16, he says, "He shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be a munition of rocks." These shall be a bulwark round him for his guard and safety. When sinners therefore flee to the mountains, and to the rocks, they may be supposed to seek a thick covering, or a shield of defence to secure them, where the strokes of divine anger shall not break through and reach them. They trust to the solid protection of the rocks, and the strength of the mountains to guard them; but these, alas! can yield no shelter from the stroke of the arm of God. Should the rocks, O sinner! attempt to befriend thee, and surround thee with their thickest fortification, his wrath would cleave them asunder and pierce thee to the soul, with greater ease than thou canst break through a paper wall with the battering engines of war. Ask the prophet Nahum, who was acquainted with the majesty of God, and he shall tell thee, how it "throws down the mountain, and tears the rock in pieces. When his fury is poured out like fire, the mountains quake at him, the hills melt, the earth is burnt at his presence, with all that" dwell therein. He that "has his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet," what mountain "can stand before his indignation?" And where is the rock "that can abide in the fierceness of his anger?" Nah. i. 2—6. Were the whole globe of the earth one massy rock, and should it yawn to the very centre to give thee a refuge and hiding-place, and then close again and surround thee with its solid defence, yet, when the Lord commands, the earth will obey the voice of him that made it; this solid earth would cleave again and resign the guilty prisoner, and yield thee up to the sword of his justice. Wheresoever God resolves to strike, safety and defence are impossible things. The sinner must suffer without remedy, and without hope, who has provoked an Almighty God, and awakened the wrath of that Saviour "who can subdue all things to himself."

4. 'Rocks and mountains' falling upon us are 'instruments of sudden and overwhelming death.' When sinners therefore call to the 'rocks and mountains to fall up-

on them and cover them,' they are supposed to endeavour to put an end to their own beings by some overwhelming destruction, that they may not live to feel and endure the resentments of an affronted God, and an abused Saviour. Though they are just raised to life, they would fain die again ; but God, who calls the dead from their graves, will forbid the rocks and the mountains, and every creature, to lend sinners their aid to destroy themselves. Sinners, in that dreadful day, shall 'seek death, but death shall flee from them.' Their natures are now made immortal, and the fall of rocks and mountains cannot crush them to death. They must live to sustain the weight of divine wrath, which is heavier than rocks and mountains.

The life which God hath now given to men in this mortal state, may be given up again, or thrown away by the daring impiety of self-murder ; and they may make many creatures instruments of their own destruction ; but the life which the Son of God shall give them, when he calls them from the dead is everlasting ; they cannot resign their existence and immortality, they cannot part with it, nor can any creature take it from them. They would rather die than see God in his majesty, or the Lamb arrayed in his robes of judgment ; but the wretches are immortalized to punishment, by the long abused majesty and power of God : and they must live forever to learn what it is to despise the authority of God, and to abuse the grace of a Saviour. Their doom is "everlasting burnings : they have no rest day nor night, the smoke of their torment will ascend for ever and ever, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." Rev. xiv. 10, 11.

Thus have we considered those huge and bulky beings, the rocks and the mountains, in all their vast and mighty figures and appearances, with all their clefts, and dens, and caverns, for shelter and concealment, with all their fortification and massy thickness for defence, and with all their power to crush and destroy mankind, and yet we find them utterly insufficient to hide, cover, or protect guilty creatures, in that great day of the wrath of God and the Lamb.

REFLECTIONS ON THE FOREGOING DISCOURSE.

1. 'How strangely do all the appearances of Christ to sinners, in the several seasons and dispensations of his

grace, differ from that last great and solemn appearance, which to them will be a dispensation of final vengeance. He visited the world in divine visions of old, even from the day of the sin of Adam, and it was to reveal mercy to sinful man; and he sometimes assumed the majesty of God, to let the world know he was not to be trifled with. He visited the earth at his incarnation: how lowly was his state! how full of grace his ministry! yet he then gave notice of this day of vengeance, when he should appear in his own and his Father's most awful glories.

He visits the nations now with the word of salvation, he appears in the glass of his gospel, and in the ordinances of his sanctuary, as a Saviour whose heart melts with love, and in the language of his tenderest compassions, and of his dying groans, he invites sinners to be reconciled to an offended God. He appears as a Lamb made a sacrifice for sin, and as a Minister of his Father's mercy, offering and distributing pardons to criminals. But, when he visits the world as a final judge, how solemn and illustrious will that appearance be? How terrible his countenance to all those who have refused to receive him as a Saviour? "Behold he cometh in flaming fire, with ten thousand of his angels, to render vengeance to them that" resisted his grace, and disobeyed the invitation of his gospel, 2 Thes. i. 7.

Time was, when the "Father sent forth his Son, not to condemn the world, but that through him the world might have life," John iii. 17. But the time is coming, when God shall send him arrayed with Majesty, and with righteous indignation, to condemn the rebellious world, and inflict upon them the pains of eternal death. Hast thou seen him, O my soul! in the discoveries of his mercy, fly to him with all the wings of faith and love, with all the speed of desire and joy fly to him, receive his grace, and accept of his salvation, that when the day of the wrath of the Lamb shall appear, thou mayest behold his countenance without terror and confusion.

Refl. 2. 'How very different will the thoughts of sinners be in that day, from what they are at present? How different their wishes and their inclinations?' And that with regard to this one terror, which my text describes, viz. that they shall address themselves to the rocks and mountains for shelter, and fly into the dens and caverns

of the earth for concealment and safety. Let us survey this in a few particulars.

Sinners, whose 'looks were once lofty and disdainful,' whose eyes were exalted in pride, their mouth set against the heavens, and their hearts haughty and full of scorn, they shall be humbled to the dust of the earth, they shall creep into the hiding-places of the moles and the bats, and thrust their heads into holes and caverns, and dens of desolation, at the appearance of God their Creator in flaming fire, and the Son of God their Judge; for he is the avenger of his own and his Father's injured honours.

Sinners who were 'once fond of their idols and their sensual delights,' who made idols to themselves of every agreeable creature, and gave it that place in their hearts which belongs only to God, they shall be horribly confounded in that day, when God shall appear in his Majesty, to shake the earth to the centre, and to burn the surface of it with all its bravery. This is nobly described by the prophet Isaiah, chap. the 2d from 10—21. "In that day shall a man cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made, each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats, to go into the clefts of the rock, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth."

Sinners who once 'could not tell how to spend a day without gay company,' those sons and daughters of mirth, who turned their midnights into noon, with the splendor of their lamps, and the rich and shining furniture of their palaces, those noisy companions of riot, who made the streets of the city resound with their midnight revels, they shall now fly to the solitary caverns of the rocks, and would be glad to dwell there in darkness and silence for ever, if they might but avoid the wrath of a provoked God, and the countenance of an abused Saviour. They would fain be shut up for ever from day-light, lest they should see the face of an Almighty enemy, whose name and honour have been reproached, in their songs of lewd jollity and profaneness.

Sinners who once 'were fond of liberty in the wildest sense,' and could not bear that any restraints should be laid upon their persons or their wishes, who never could endure the thought of a confinement to their closets, for

one half hour to converse with God, or with their own souls there, they call now aloud to the rocks and the mountains to immure them round, as a refuge from the eye of their Judge. They were once perpetually roving abroad, and gadding through all the gay scenes of sensuality, in quest of new and flowery pleasures, but now they beg to be imprisoned for ever in the dens and caves of the earth; the deepest and most dismal caves are their most ardent wishes, that they might never see the countenance of their divine Avenger, nor feel the weight of his hand.

Sinners who 'heretofore thought themselves and their deeds of darkness secure enough from the eye of God, and from the strokes of his justice,' while they revelled in their common habitations, those, who even under the open sky could defy the Almighty, could laugh at his threatenings, and mock the prophecies of his vengeance, now they can find no caverns, deep or dark enough, to hide them from his sight; his lightnings penetrate the hardest rocks, and shine into the deepest solitudes: there is no screen or shelter thick and strong enough to stand between God and them, and to cover and shield them from his thunder.— They call now to the mountains and the rocks to be an eternal screen; but the rocks and the mountains are deaf to their cry. Then shall they remember, with unknown regret and anguish, those days of grace, when Christ Jesus, who is now their Judge, offered himself to become a screen to them, and a defence from the anger of God their Creator: but they rejected this offered grace. He would have been the rock of their safety, where they should have found refuge from the fiery threatenings of the broken law, and the majesty of an offended God: the Father himself had appointed him for this kind office to repenting sinners, and perhaps he gave Moses a type or emblem of it, when he commanded him to hide himself in the clefts of the rock, to secure him from destruction, while the burning blaze of his glory passed by, Exod. xxxiii. 22. And Isaiah the prophet had foretold, that this Jesus should be as "the shadow of a great rock," to shelter them from the beams of the wrath of God; but they refused this blessing, they renounced this refuge; and now they find there is no other rock sufficient to become a shelter from the stroke of his almighty arm, or a sufficient shadow from the burning vengeance.

Sinners, who 'once over-rated their flesh and blood, and loved it with infinite fondness,' who treated their fleshly appetites with excessive nicety and elegance, and affected a humourous delicacy in every thing round about them, would now gladly creep into the mouldy caverns of the rocks, they would be glad to hide and defile themselves in the dark and noisome grottos of the earth, and squeeze their bodies into the rough and narrow clefts, to shield themselves from the indignation of him that sits upon the throne, and of the Lamb.

Those who 'once were so tender of this mortal life and limbs,' and could not think of bearing the least hardship for the sake of virtue and piety, are now wishing to have those delicate limbs of theirs crushed by the fall of rocks and mountains. They wish earnestly to have their lives and their souls destroyed for ever, and their whole natures buried in desolation and death, if they might but avoid the eternal agonies and torments that are prepared for them. Now they long for caverns, and graves, to hide them for ever from the justice of God, whose authority they have despised, and from the wrath of a Saviour whose mercy they have impiously renounced.

Look forward, O my soul! to this awful and dreadful hour; survey this tremendous scene of confusion, when sinners shall run counter to all their former principles and wishes, and pass a quite different judgment upon their sinful delights, from what they were wont to do in the days of this life of vanity. Learn, O my soul! to judge of things more agreeably to the appearances of that day. Never canst thou set the flattering pleasures of sense, and the joys of sin, in a truer and juster view, than the light of this ominous and tremendous judgment.

Refl. 3. 'How great and dreadful must the distress of creatures be, when they cannot bear to see the face of God their Creator?' How terrible must be the circumstances of the sons of men, when they cannot endure to see the face of the Son of God, but would fain hide themselves from the sight under rocks and mountains? How wretched must their state be, who avoid the face of the blessed God with horror, which the holy angels ever behold with most intense delight, and which the saints rejoice in as their highest happiness? It is their heaven to see God, and behold the glory of his Son Jesus, Matth. v. 8. John xvii. But

this is the very hell of sinners in that dismal hour, and will fill their souls with such inexpressible anguish, that they call to the rocks and mountains to hide them from the sight. Dreadful and deplorable is their case indeed, who cannot endure to see the countenance of Jesus the Son of God, Jesus the Saviour of men, the copy of the Father's glory, and the image of his beauty and love.—They cannot bear to see that Jesus who is the chiefest of ten thousands, and altogether lovely; they fly from that blessed countenance, which is the ornament, and the joy of all the holy and happy creation; that blessed countenance is become the terror and confusion of impenitent and guilty rebels.

And what shall I do, if I should be found among this criminal number, in that great day? If I look at the *wisdom* and the *righteousness* of God, these will reflect the keenest rays of horror and anguish upon my soul, for it is that wisdom, and that righteousness, that have joined to prepare the salvation which I have rejected; and therefore now that wise and righteous God seeth it proper and necessary to punish me with everlasting sorrows. If I look at the *power* of God, it is a dreadful sight. Eternal and almighty power, that can break through rocks and mountains, to inflict vengeance upon the guilty, and that stands engaged by his honour to break my rebellious spirit with unknown torments. If I look at his *goodness* or his *love,* it is love and goodness that I have despised and abused, and it is now changed into divine fury. If I look at the *face of Jesus*, and find there the correspondent features of his Father, I shall then hate to see it—for this very reason, because it bears his Father's image, who is so terrible to my thoughts. I shall neither be able to bear the sight of God nor of his fairest copy, that is, Jesus his Son, because I am so shamefully unlike them both; and besides, I have affronted their majesty, and despised their mercy.

How painful and smarting will be the reflection of my heart in that day, when I shall remember, that Jesus called out to me from heaven, by the messengers of his grace, and said, "Behold me, behold me, look unto me from the ends of the earth, and be saved. But now he is armed with a commission of vengeance, and he strikes terror and exquisite pain into my soul with every frown, so that I shall wish to be forever 'hid from the face of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come. and who shall be able' to endure

this wrath, to stand before his thunder, or bear the lightning of this day? Alas, how miserable must I be by an everlasting necessity, if I cannot bear the countenance of God and Christ, which is the spring of unchangeable happiness to all the saints and the blessed angels? O may I timely secure the love of my God, and gain an interest in the favour and salvation of the blessed Jesus! Here, O Lord, at thy foot I lay down all the weapons of my former rebellions; I implore thy love through the interest of thy Son, the great Mediator. Let me see the light of thy countenance, and the smiles of thy face.—Let me see a reconciled God, and let him tell me that my sins are all forgiven; then shall I not be afraid to meet the countenance of him that sits upon the throne, or the Lamb, when Christ shall return from heaven, to punish the impenitent rebels against divine grace.

Refl. 4. 'How hopeless, as well as distressed, is the case of sinners in that day, when they are driven to this last extremity, to seek help from the rocks and the mountains?' It is the last, but the fruitless refuge of a frighted and perishing creature. The rocks and mountains refuse to help them; they will not crush to death those wretches, whom the justice of God has doomed to a painful immortality, nor will they conceal or shelter those obstinate rebels, whom the Son of God has raised out of their graves, to be exposed to public shame and punishment. Those high and hollow rocks, those dismal dens and caverns, dark as midnight, those deep and gloomy retreats of melancholy and sorrow, which they shunned with the utmost aversion, and could hardly bear to think of, without horror, here on earth, are now become their only retreat and shelter; but it is a very vain and hopeless one.

When I see such awful appearances in nature, huge and lofty rocks hanging over my head, and at every step of my approach they seem to nod upon me with overwhelming ruin, when my curiosity searches far into their hollow clifts, their dark and deep caverns of solitude and desolation, methinks while I stand amongst them, I can hardly think myself in safety, and at best they give a sort of solemn and dreadful delight. Let me improve the scene to religious purposes, and raise a divine meditation. Am I one of those wretches, who shall call to these huge impending rocks to fall upon me? Am I that guilty and

miserable creature, who shall entreat these mountains to cover me from him that sits on the throne and the Lamb? Am I prepared to meet the countenance of the blessed Jesus the Judge in that day? Have I such an acquaintance with the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, such a holy faith in his mediation, such a sincere love to him, and such an unfeigned repentance of all my sins, that I can look upon him as my friend and my refuge, and a friend infinitely better than rocks and mountains; for he not only screens me from the divine anger, but introduces me into the Father's love and places me in his blissful presence for ever?

Refl. 5. 'What hideous and everlasting mischief is contained in the nature of sin, especially sin against the gospel of Christ, against the methods of grace, and the offers of salvation, which exposes creatures to such extreme distress?' The fairest and the most flattering iniquity, what beautiful colours soever it may put on in the hour of temptation, yet it carries all this hidden mischief and terror in the bosom of it, for it frights the creature from the sight of his Creator and his Saviour, and makes him fly to every vain refuge. Adam and Eve, the parents of our race, when they lost their innocence and became criminals, fled from the presence of God, with whom they conversed before in holy friendship, Gen. iii. 8. 'They hid themselves among the trees of Paradise,' and the thickest shadows of the garden; but the eye and the voice of God reached them there. The curse found them out, though that was a curse allayed with the promised blessing of a Saviour. Guilt will work in the conscience, and tell us, that 'God is angry,' and the next thought is, 'where shall I hide myself from an angry God?' But when the mercy of God has taught us where we may hide ourselves, even under the shadow of the cross of his Son, and we refuse to make him our refuge, there remains nothing but a final horror of soul, and a hopeless address to rocks and mountains, to hide us from an offended God, and a provoked Saviour.

Whensoever, O my soul! thou shalt find or feel some flattering iniquity alluring thy senses, making court to thy heart, and ready to gain upon thy inward wishes, remember the distress and terror of heart that sinners must undergo in the great and terrible day of the Lord. Think of

the rocks and mountains which they vainly call upon to befriend them, to shield them from the vengeance of that almighty arm which is provoked by sin, to make his creatures miserable. Remember, O my soul! and fear; remember and resist the vile temptation, and stand afar off from that practice, which will make thee afraid to see the face of God.

Refl. 6. 'Of what infinite importance is it then to sinners, to gain a humble acquaintance and friendship with the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, that we may be able with comfort, to behold the face of him that sits on the throne in that day.' Which of us can say, 'I am not a sinner, I am not guilty before God?' And which of us then has the courage and hardiness to declare, 'I have no need of a Saviour?' And is there any one among us, who hath not yet fled for refuge to Jesus our only and sufficient hope? There is a protection provided against a provoked God, but there is none against a neglected and abused Saviour: I mean, where this neglect and abuse is final and unrepented of. O how solicitous should every soul be, in a matter of this divine moment, this everlasting importance? What words of compassion shall we use, what words of awakening terror, to put sinners in mind of their extreme danger, if they neglect the only security which the gospel has appointed? What language of fear and importunity shall we make use of, to hasten you, O sinners! to the acquaintance, the faith and the love, of Jesus the Saviour, that you may behold his face, and the face of the Father, with serenity and joy in the last day? Give yourselves up to him then without further delay, as your teacher, your high-priest, your reconciler, your Lord and king. His blessed offices are the only chambers of protection, when God shall arise to burn the world, and to avenge himself on his enemies that will not be reconciled.

Refl. 7. 'Let us take occasion from my text, also to meditate on the happy circumstances of true Christians, in that day of terror.' Behold the Judge appears, he cometh in the clouds surrounded with armies of avenging angels, the ministers of his indignation; he rideth on a chariot of flaming fire, the earth with all its mountains melt like wax at the presence of the Lord, the fields and the forests become one spacious blaze, the sea grows dry

and forsakes its shores, and rivers flee away at his lightning; the rocks are broken and shivered at the appearance of his majesty, the tombs are thrown open, and with terrible dismay shall the graves give up their dead; the pyramids of brick and stone, moulder and sink into dust, the sepulchres of brass and marble yield up their royal prisoners, and all the captives of death awake and start into life, at the voice of the Son of God. Amidst all these scenes of surprise and horror, with how serene a countenance, and how peaceful a soul, do the saints awake from their beds of earth? Calm and serene among all these confusions they arise from their long slumber, and go to meet their returning Saviour and their friend. They have seen him in the glass of his gospel, submitted to his laws, and rejoiced in his grace, and they now delight to see him face to face in his glory. They have seen him vested with his commission of mercy, they have heard and received his message of goodness and love, and they cannot but rejoice to see him coming to fulfil his last promises. They have cheerfully subjected themselves to his government here on earth, they have followed him in paths of holiness through the wilderness of this world; and what remains, but that they be publicly acknowledged by Jesus the Judge of all, and follow him up to the place of blessedness which he hath prepared for them.

Perhaps some of these holy ones, in the days of the flesh, were banished from the cities and the societies of men for the sake of Christ, they were driven out from their native towns, and forced to seek a shelter in solitary 'dens and caves' among rocks and mountains, "to wander through deserts in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented," Heb. xi. 31. They made the clefts of the rock and caverns of the earth their refuge from the face of their cruel persecutors. The mountains and rocks sheltered them from the wrath of princes, and the dark grottos of the earth, and the dens of wild beasts, concealed them from the rage of men, from the sword of the mighty; but now the scene is gloriously changed, the martyrs and holy confessors awaking from their graves, exult and triumph in the smiles of their Judge, and receive public honours before the whole creation of God. They behold the infinite consternation of haughty tyrants and persecuting princes, of proud generals and bloody captains in that day: they

hear them 'call to rocks and mountains to hide them from the face of him that sits upon the throne and the Lamb.' The authority and regal honour of the emperors of the earth, hath long slept in the dust, but it is lost there for ever; their glory shall not awake nor arise with them. Behold the mighty sinners who have been the enemies of Christ, or negligent of his salvation, how they creep affrighted out of their shattered marbles, and leave all that pomp and pride of death in ruins, to appear before God with shame and everlasting contempt. The men of arms, the captains and sons of valour, whose swords lay under their heads, with their trophies and titles spread around them, shall raise their heads up from the dust, with utmost affright and anguish of spirit: their courage fails them before the face of Jesus the Lord and Judge of the whole creation. They would fly to the common refuge of slaves, they shrink into the holes of the rocks, and call to the mountains to screen and protect them: 'and every bondman, and every freeman,' who have not known nor loved God and Christ, are plunged into extremest distress; but the humble Christian is serene and joyful, and lifts up his head with courage and delight, in the midst of these scenes of astonishment and dismay.

'He is come, he is come, saith the saint, even that Lord Jesus, whom I have seen, whom I have known and loved in the days of my mortal life, whom I have long waited for in the dust of death; he is come to reward all my labours, to wipe away all my sorrows, to finish my faith, and turn it into sight, to fulfil all my hopes and his own promises; he is come to deliver me for ever, from all my enemies, and to bear me to the place which he has prepared for those that love him, and long for his appearance.

'O blessed be the God of grace, who hath convinced me of the sins of my nature, and the sins of my life in the days of my flesh; who hath discovered to me the danger of a guilty and sinful state, hath shewn me the commission of mercy in the hands of his Son, hath pointed me to the Lamb of God, who was offered as a sacrifice to take away the sins of men, and hath inclined me to receive him in all his divine characters and offices, and to follow the Captain of my salvation through all the labours and dangers of life. I have trusted him, I have loved him, I have endeavoured, though under many frailties, to honour and

obey him, and I can now behold his face without terror. While the mighty men of the earth tremble with amazement, and call to the rocks and mountains to hide them from his face, I rejoice to see him in his robes of judgment, for he is come to pronounce me righteous in the face of men and angels, to declare me a good and faithful servant before the whole creation, to set the crown of victory on my head, to take me to heaven with him, that 'where he is I may be also to behold his glory,' and to partake for ever of the blessings of his love.' Amen.

DISCOURSE VII.

NO NIGHT IN HEAVEN.

Rev. xxii. 25. And there shall be no Night there.

Length of night and overspreading darkness in the winter season, carries so many inconveniences with it, that it is generally esteemed a most uncomfortable part of our time. Though night and day necessarily succeed each other all the year, by the wise appointment of God in the course of nature, by means of the revolution of the heavenly bodies, or rather of this earthly globe; yet the night-season is neither so delightful nor so useful a part of life, as the duration of day-light. It is the voice of all nature, as well as the word of Solomon, "light is sweet, and a pleasant thing to enjoy the sun-beams." Light gives a glory and beauty to every thing that is visible, and shews the face of nature in its most agreeable colours; but night, as it covers all the visible world with one dark and undistinguishing veil, is less pleasing to all the animal parts of the creation. Therefore as *hell* and the place of punishment is called 'utter darkness' in Scripture; so *heaven* is represented as a mansion of 'glory,' as the 'inheritance of the saints in light.' And this light is constant without interruption, and everlasting, or without end. So my text expresses it, 'there shall be no night there.'

Let it be observed, that in the language of the holy writers, 'light' is often ascribed to intellectual beings, and is used as a metaphor to imply 'knowledge, and holiness, and joy.' 'Knowledge' as the beauty and excellency of the 'mind,' 'holiness' as the best regulation of the 'will,' and 'joy' as the harmony of our best affections in the possession of what we love: and in opposition to these, 'ignorance, iniquity, and sorrow,' are represented by the metaphor of 'darkness.' Then we are in 'darkness' in a spiritual sense, when the understanding is beclouded or led

into mistake, or when the will is perverted or turned away from God or holiness, or when the most uncomfortable affections prevail in the soul. I might cite particular texts of Scripture to exemplify all this. And when it is said, 'there shall be no night in heaven,' it may be very well applied in the spiritual sense; there shall be no errors or mistakes among the blessed, no such ignorance as to lead them astray, or to make them uneasy; the will shall never be turned aside from its pursuit of holiness, and obedience to God; nor shall the affections ever be ruffled with any thing that may administer grief or pain. Clear and unerring knowledge, unspotted holiness, and everlasting joy, shall be the portion of all the inhabitants of the upper world. These are more common subjects of discourse.

But I chuse rather at present to consider this word NIGHT, in its literal sense, and shall endeavour to represent part of the blessedness of the heavenly state, under this special description of it. 'There is no night there.'

Now in order to pursue this design, let us take a brief survey of the several *evils* or *inconveniences* which attend the night, or the season of darkness here on earth, and shew how far the heavenly world is removed, and free from all manner of inconvenience of this kind.

1. Though night be the season of sleep for the relief of nature, and for our refreshment after the labours of the day; yet 'it is a certain sign of the weakness and weariness of nature, when it wants such refreshments, and such dark seasons of relief.' But there is no night in heaven. Say, O ye inhabitants of that vital world, are ye ever weary? Do your natures know any such weakness? Or are your holy labours of such a kind, as to expose you to fatigue, or to tire your spirits? The blessed above 'mount up towards God as on eagles' wings, they run at the command of God and are not weary, they walk on the hills of paradise and never faint,' as the Prophet Isaiah expresses a vigorous and pleasurable state. Chap. xl. ver. last.

There are no such animal bodies in heaven, whose natural springs of action can be exhausted or weakened by the business of the day: there is no flesh and blood there, to complain of weariness, and to want rest.* O blessed state,

* When the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 50, says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," the meaning is that moral pravity, a fallen and corrupt nature, cannot. We have no precise instruction concerning the nature

where our faculties shall be so happily suited to our work, that we shall never feel ourselves weary of it, nor fatigued by it.

And, as there is no weariness, so there is no sleeping there. Sleep was not made for the heavenly state. Can the spirits of the just ever sleep, under the full blaze of divine glory, under the incessant communications of divine love, under the perpetual influences of the grace of God the Father, and of Jesus the Saviour, and amidst the inviting confluence of every spring of blessedness?

2. Another inconvenience of night, near akin to the former, is that 'business is interrupted by it, partly for want of light to perform it, as well as for want of strength and spirits to pursue it.' This is constantly visible in the successions of labour and repose here on earth; and the darkness of the night is appointed to interrupt the course of labour, and the business of the day, that nature may be recruited. But the business of heaven is never interrupted; there is everlasting light and everlasting strength. Say, ye blessed spirits on high, who join in the services which are performed for God and the Lamb there, ye who unite all your powers in the worship and homage that is paid to the Father and to the Son, ye that mingle in all the joyful conversation of that divine and holy Assembly, say, is there found any useless hour there? Do your devotions, your duties and your joys, ever suffer such an entire interrup-

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of our bodies after the resurrection. Our Lord's body after *his* resurrection had still the same physical constitution apparently, which it always had. When his disciples were terrified, supposing that they saw an apparition, he shewed them his body, and feet, told them to feel or handle him, and added, "For a spirit hath not *flesh* and *bones*, as ye see me have." Luke xxiv. 39. Now, we are told, that Jesus will "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body," Phil. iii. 21. If then he still possess the same body in glory with which he rose, and if it be of the same materials as then; it will follow, that "flesh and blood," in the physical sense of the phrase, may enter into the heavenly state; but it will be flesh and blood purified from all its present infirmities, and endued with every quality to render it a delightful habitation for the blessed soul in the worship and enjoyments of heaven. God can as easily render a body of flesh and blood immortal as any other kind of body. Still we have no assurance of what kind it will be; for we are not certain that no change passed upon our Lord's body, when he ascended to heaven. It would therefore seem wise not to attempt to define or deny what the holy Scriptures do not define or deny. Whatever the bodies of glorified saints may be, they will not be subject to weariness, or any other painful sensation. They will be instruments of utility and pleasure, not clogs and hindrances; and to know this, seems sufficient for us in our present state.—ED.

tion of rest and silence, as the season of darkness on earth necessarily creates among the inhabitants of our world?

The living creatures * which are represented by John the Apostle, in Rev. iv. whether they signify saints or angels, yet they were 'full of eyes' that never slumber; 'they rest not day nor night;' this is spoken in the language of mortals, to signify, that they are never interrupted by any change of seasons, or intervening darkness in the honours they pay to God. They are described as ever saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." And the same sort of expression is used concerning the saints in heaven, Rev. vii. 15.—"They who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple," i. e. they constantly serve or worship him in his holy temple in heaven. Perhaps the different orders and ranks of them in a continual succession, are ever doing some honours to God. As there is no night there, so there is no cessation of their services, their worship, and their holy exercises, in one form or another, throughout the duration of their being.

Our pleasures here on earth are short-lived: if they are intense, nature cannot bear them long, any more than constant business and labour: and, if our labours and our pleasures should happily join and mingle here on earth, which is not always the case, yet night compels us to break off the pleasing labour, and we must rest from the most delightful business. Happy is that region on high, where business and pleasure are for ever the same among all the inhabitants of it, and there is no pause or entire cessation of the one or the other. Tell me, ye warm and lively Christians, when your hearts are sweetly and joyfully engaged in the worship of God, in holy conversation, or in any pious services here on earth, how often you have been forced to break off these celestial entertainments by the returning night? But in the heavenly state there is everlasting active service, with everlasting delight and satisfaction.

In that blessed world there can be no idleness, no in-

* The word Ζῶα, which is translated *beasts*, signifies only *animals* or *living creatures*, and does not carry with it so mean and so disagreeable an idea as the word *beasts* in *English*.—WATTS.

activity, no trifling intervals to pass away time, no vacant or empty spaces in eternal life. Who can be idle under the immediate eye of God? Who can trifle in the presence of Christ? Who can neglect the pleasurable work of heaven, under the sweet influences of the present Deity, and under the smiles of his countenance, who approves all their work and worship?

3. As in our present world 'the hours of night' are unactive if we sleep, so 'they seem long and tedious when our eyes are wakeful, and sleep flies from us.' Perhaps we hear the clock strike one hour after another, with wearisome longings for the next succeeding hour: we wish the dark season at an end, and we long for the approach of morning, we grow impatient for the dawning of the day. But in heaven, ye spirits who have dwelt longest there, can ye remember one tiresome or tedious hour, through all the years of your residence in that country? Is there not eternal wakefulness among all the blessed? Can any of you ever indulge a slumber? Can you sleep in heaven? Can you want it, or wish for it? No, for that world is all vital and sprightly for ever. When we leave this flesh and blood, farewell to all the tedious measures of time, farewell tiresome darkness; our whole remaining duration is life and light, vital activity and vigour, attended with everlasting holiness and joy.

4. While we are here on earth, 'the darkness of the night often exposes us to the danger of losing our way, of wandering into confusion, or falling into mischief.' When the sun-beams have withdrawn their light, and midnight clouds overspread the heaven, we cannot see our path before us, we cannot pursue our proper course, nor secure ourselves from stumbling. How many travellers have been betrayed by the thick shadows of the night, into mistaken ways or pathless deserts, into endless mazes among thorns and briars, into bogs, and pits, and precipices, into sudden destruction and death? But there are no dangers of this kind in the heavenly world. All the regions of paradise are for ever illuminated by the glory of God: the light of his countenance shines upon every step that we shall take, and brightens all our way. We shall walk in the light of God, and under the blessed beams of the Sun of righteousness, and we are secured for ever against wandering, and against every danger of tripping or falling in our course. 'Our feet may stumble on the dark moun-

tains here below,' but there is no stumbling-block on the hills of paradise, nor can we go astray from our God or our duty. The paths of that country are all pleasure, and ever-living day-light shines upon them without end. Happy beings who dwell or travel there!

5. 'In the night we are exposed here on earth, to the violence and plunder of wicked men, whether we are abroad or at home.' There is scarce any safety now a-days to those who travel in the night, and even in our own habitations there is frequent fear and surprise. At that season, the sons of mischief 'dig through houses in the dark, which they had marked for themselves in the day-time: they lurk in corners to seize the innocent, and to rob him' of his possessions. But in the heavenly world there is no dark hour; there is nothing that can encourage such mischievous designs; nor are any of the sons of violence, or the malicious powers of darkness, suffered to have an abode or refuge in that country. No surprise nor fear belongs to the inhabitants of those regions. Happy souls, who spend all their life in the light of the countenance of God, and are for ever secure from the plots and mischievous devices of the wicked!

While we dwell here below, amongst the changing seasons of light and darkness, what daily care is taken to shut the doors of our dwellings against the men of mischief? What solicitude in a time of war to keep the gates of our towns and cities well secured against all invasion of enemies! 'Every man with his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night.' But in that blessed world there is no need of such defences; no such guardian cares to secure the inhabitants. 'The gates of that city shall not be shut by day, and there is no night there.' There shines perpetual day-light, and the gates are ever open to receive new-comers from our world, or for the conveyance of orders and messages to and fro from the throne through all the dominions of God and of the Lamb. Blessed are the inhabitants of that country, where there are no dangers arising from any of the wicked powers of darkness, nor any dark minute to favour their plots of mischief.

6. The 'time of night and darkness is the time of the concealment of secret sins.' Shameful iniquities are then practised amongst men, because the darkness is a cover to them. "The eye of the adulterer watches for the twilight,

saying, no eye shall see me." Job xxiv. 15. 'In the black and dark night' he hopes for concealment as well as the thief and the murderer, "and they that are drunken, are drunken in the night," Thes. v. 7. The hours of darkness are a temptation to these iniquities, and the shadows of the evening are a veil to cover them from the sight of men: they find a screen behind the curtains of the night, and a refuge in thick darkness. But in the heavenly world there is no temptation to such iniquities, no defilement can gain an entrance there, nor could it find any veil or covering. The regions of light, and peace, and holy love, are never violated with such scenes of villany and guilt. No secret sins can be committed there, nor can they hope for any screen to defend them from the eye of God and the Lamb, 'whose eyes are like a flame of fire.' The light of God shines round every creature in that country, and there is not a saint or angel there, that desires a covering from the sight of God, nor would accept of a veil or screen to interpose between him and the lovely glories of divine holiness and grace. To behold God, and to live under the blessings of his eye, is their everlasting and chosen joy. O that our world were more like it!

7. When the night returns upon us here on earth, 'the pleasures of sight vanish and are lost.' Knowledge is shut out at one entrance in a great degree, and one of our senses is withheld from the spreading beauties and glories of this lower creation, almost as though we were deprived of it, and were grown blind for a season.

It is true, the God of nature has appointed the moon and stars to relieve the darkness at some seasons, that when the sun is withdrawn, half the world at those hours may not be in confusion: and by the inventions of men, we are furnished with lamps and candles to relieve our darkness within doors. But if we stir abroad in the black and dark night, instead of the various and delightful scenes of the creation of God in the skies and the fields, we are presented with an universal blank of nature, and one of the great entertainments and satisfactions of this life, is quite taken away from us. But in heaven, the glories of that world are for ever in view. The beauteous scenes and prospects of the hills of paradise are never hidden: we shall there continually behold a rich variety of 'things which eye hath not seen on earth, which ear hath not

heard, and which the heart of man hath not conceived.' Say, ye souls in paradise, ye inhabitants of that glorious world, is there any loss of pleasure by your absence from those works of God which are visible here on earth, while you are for ever entertained with those brighter works of God in the upper world? while every corner of that country is enlightened by the glory of God himself, and while the Son of God with all his beams of grace shines for ever upon it.

8. It is another unpleasing circumstance of the night season, 'that it is the coldest part of time.' When the sun is sunk below the earth, and its beams are hidden from us, its kindly and vital heat, as well as its light, are removed from one side of the globe; and this gives a sensible uneasiness in the hours of midnight, to those who are not well provided with warm accommodations.

And I might add also, it is too often night with us in a spiritual sense, while we dwell here on earth: our hearts are cold as well as dark. How seldom do we feel that fervency of spirit in religious duties which God requires? How cool is our love to the greatest and the best of beings? How languid and indifferent are our affections to the Son of God, the chiefest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely? And how much doth the devotion of our souls want its proper ardour and vivacity?

But when the soul is arrived at heaven, we shall be all warm and fervent in our divine and delightful work. As there shall be nothing painful to the senses in that blessed climate, so there shall not be one cold heart there, nor so much as one lukewarm worshipper; for we shall live under the immediate rays of God who formed the light, and under the kindest influences of 'Jesus, the Sun of righteousness.' We shall be made like his angels who are most active spirits, and 'his ministers' who "are flames of fire." Psal. civ. 3. Nor shall any dulness or indifferency hang upon our sanctified powers and passions: they shall be all warm and vigorous in their exercise, amidst the holy enjoyments of that country.

In the 9th and last place, as night is the season appointed for sleep, 'so it becomes a constant periodical emblem of death, as it returns every evening.' Sleep and midnight, as I have shewn before, are no seasons of labour or activity, nor of delight in the visible things of this world.

It is a dark and stupid scene wherein we behold nothing with truth, though we are sometimes deceived and deluded by dreaming visions and vanities. Night, and the slumbers of it, are a sort of shorter death and burial, interposed between the several daily scenes and transactions of human life. But in heaven, as there is no sleeping, there is no dying, nor is there any thing there that looks like death. Sleep, the image or emblem of death, is for ever banished from that world. All is vital activity there: every power is immortal, and every thing that dwells there is for ever alive. There can be no death, nor the image of it, where the ever-living God dwells and shines with his kindest beams; his presence maintains perpetual vitality in every soul, and keeps the new creature in its youth and vigour for ever. The saints shall never have reason to mourn over their withering graces, languid virtues, or dying comforts; nor shall they ever complain of drowsy faculties, or unactive powers, where God and the Lamb are forever present in the midst of them. Shall I invite your thoughts to dwell a little upon this subject?

Shall we make a more particular 'enquiry, whence it comes to pass that there is no night nor darkness in the heavenly city?' We are told a little before the words of my text, that 'the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. There is no need of the sun by day, or of the moon by night;' there is no need of any such change of seasons as day and night in the upper regions, nor any such alternate enlighteners of a dark world, as God has placed in our firmanent, or in this visible sky. The inheritance of the saints in light is sufficiently irradiated by God himself, who at his first call made the light spring up out of darkness over a wide chaos of confusion, before the sun and moon appeared; and the beams of divine light, grace and glory, are communicated from God, the original foundation of it, by the Lamb, to all the inhabitants of the heavenly country. It was by Jesus his Son that God made the light at first, and by him he conveys it to all the happy worlds.

There is no doubt of this in the present heaven of saints departed from flesh, who are ascended 'to the spirits of the just made perfect.' It is one of their privileges that they go to dwell, not only where they see the face of God, but where they behold the glory of Christ,

and converse with 'Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant,' and are 'for ever present with the Lord' who redeemed them. Heb. xii. 23, 24. 2 Cor. v. 8. Since his mediatorial kingdom and offices are not yet finished in the present heaven of separate souls, we may depend on this blessedness to be communicated through Christ the Lamb of God, and all the spiritual enjoyments and felicities which are represented under the metaphor of 'light,' are conveyed to them through Jesus the Mediator.

The sun, in the natural world, is a bright emblem of divinity, or the Godhead, for it is the spring of all light, and heat, and life, to the creation. It is by the influences of the sun, that herbs, plants, and animals, are produced in their proper seasons, and in all their various beauties, and they are all refreshed and supported by it. Now if we should suppose this vast globe of fire which we call 'the sun,' to be inclosed in a huge hollow sphere of crystal, which should attemper its rays like a transparent veil, and give milder and gentler influences to the burning beams of it, and yet transmit every desirable and useful portion of light or heat, this would be an happy emblem of the man 'Christ Jesus, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' It is the Lamb of God who, in a mild and gracious manner, conveys the blessings originally derived from God his Father to all the saints. We partake of them in our measure in this lower world among his churches here on earth ; but it is with a nobler influence, and in a more sublime degree, the blessings of paradise are diffused through all the mansions of glory, by this illustrious medium of conveyance, Jesus the Son of God ; and there can be no night nor coldness, death nor darkness, in this happy state of separate souls.

When the bodies of the saints shall be raised again, and re-united to their proper spirits, when they shall ascend to the place of their final heaven and supreme happiness, we know not what manner of bodies they shall be, what sort of senses they shall be furnished with, nor how many powers of conversing with the corporeal world shall be bestowed upon them. Whether they shall have such organs of sensation as eyes and ears, and stand in need of such light as we derive from the sun or moon, is not absolutely certain. The Scriptures tell us it shall not be a

body of flesh and blood.* These are not materials refined enough for the heavenly state; "that which is corruptible cannot inherit incorruption." 1 Cor. xv. 50. But this we may be assured of, that whatsoever inlets of knowledge, whatever avenues of pleasure, whatever delightful sensations are necessary to make the inhabitants of that world happy, they shall be all united in that spiritual body which God will prepare for the new-raised saints. If eyes and ears shall belong to that glorified body, those sensitive powers shall be nobly enlarged, and made more delightfully susceptive of richer shares of knowledge and joy.

Or what if we shall have that body furnished with such unknown mediums, or organs of sensation, as shall make *light* and *sound*, such as we here partake of, unnecessary to us? These organs shall certainly be such, as shall transcend all the advantages that we receive in this present state from sounds or sunbeams. There shall be no disconsolate darkness, nor any tiresome silence there. There shall be no night to interrupt the business or pleasures of that everlasting day.

Or what if the whole body shall be endued all over with the senses of *seeing* and *hearing*? What if these sorts of sensations shall be diffused throughout all that immortal body, as *feeling* is diffused through all our present mortal flesh? What if God himself shall in a more illustrious manner irradiate all the powers of the body and spirit, and communicate the light of knowledge, holiness, and joy, in a superior manner to what we can now conceive or imagine? This is certain, that darkness in every sense, with all the inconveniences and unhappy consequences of it, is and must be for ever banished from the heavenly state. 'There is no night there.'

When our Lord Jesus Christ shall have "given up his" mediatorial kingdom to the Father, "and have" presented all his saints spotless and without blemish before his throne, it is hard for us mortals in the present state, to say how far he shall be the everlasting medium of the communication of divine blessings to the happy inhabitants on high.

* See note on page 131. Flesh and blood, or in other words, our bodies, are corruptible in this state of sin and death. But the bodies of our first parents, before the fall, were not subject to corruption. It does not follow, therefore, that a body of flesh and blood must necessarily be corruptible.—Ed.

Yet when we consider that the saints and angels, and the whole happy creation, are gathered together in him as *their head*,* it is certain they shall all be accounted in some sense 'his members;' and it is highly probable that he, as their head, shall be for ever active in communicating and diffusing the unknown blessings of that world, amongst all the inhabitants of it who are gathered and united in him.

I come in the last place, to make a few remarks upon the foregoing discourse, and in order to render them more effectual for our spiritual advantage, I shall consider the words of my text, 'there shall be no night there,' in their metaphorical or spiritual meaning, as well as in their literal sense. There is no night of ignorance or error in the mind, no night of guilt or of sorrow in the soul: but the blessed above shall dwell surrounded with the light of divine knowledge, they shall walk in the light of holiness, and they shall be for ever filled with the light of consolation and joy, as I have explained it at the beginning of this discourse.

The 1st remark then is this, 'When heaven, earth and hell, are compared together, with relation to light and darkness, or night and day,' we then see them in their proper distinctions and aspects. Every thing is set in its most distinguishing situation and appearance, when it is compared with things which are most opposite.

The *earth* on which we dwell during this state of trial, has neither all day nor all night belonging to it, but sometimes light appears, and again darkness, whether in a natural or a spiritual sense.

Though there be long seasons of darkness in the winter, and darkness in the summer also, in its constant returns, divides one day from another; yet the God of nature has given us a larger portion of light than there is of darkness, throughout the whole globe of the earth. And this benefit we receive by the remaining beams of the sun after its setting, and by the assistance of the moon and the stars of heaven. Blessed be God for the moon and stars, as well as for the sun-beams and the brightness of noon. Blessed be God for all the lights of nature; but we still bless him

* The Greek word ἀνακεφαλαιοω, used in Eph. i. 10. favours this meaning, and perhaps Col. i. 10. includes the same thing.

more for the light of the gospel, and for any rays from heaven, any beams of the Sun of righteousness, which diffuse in lower measures knowledge, and holiness, and comfort, among the inhabitants of this our world. God is here manifesting his love and grace in such proportions as he thinks proper. Some beams of the heavenly world break out upon us here in this dark region. God the spring of all our light, and the Lamb of God by his Spirit communicates sufficient light to us, to guide us on in our way to that heavenly country.

In *hell* there is all night and darkness, thick darkness in every sense, for the God of glory is absent there as to any manifestations of his face and favour. And therefore it is often called "outer darkness, where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth." There, is no holiness; there, is no comfort; there, are no benefits of the creation, no blessings of grace; all are forfeited and gone for ever. It is everlasting night and blackness of darkness in that world: horror of soul, without a beam of refreshment from the face of God or the Lamb forever. The devils are now "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day," Jude 6. But then their confinement shall be closer, and their darkness, guilt, and sorrow, shall be more overwhelming. Is it lawful for me in this place, to mention the description which *Milton* our English poet gives of their wretched habitation?

'A dungeon horrible on all sides round,
As one great furnace flam'd; yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Serv'd only to discover sights of woe;
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell; hope never comes,
That comes to all: but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge fed
With ever burning sulphur unconsum'd.
Such place eternal justice had prepar'd
For rebel-angels; here their pris'n ordain'd
In utter darkness, and their portion set
As far remov'd from God and light of heaven
As from the centre thrice to th' utmost pole.'

To this the poet adds,

'O how unlike the place from whence they fell!'

How unlike to that heaven which I have been describing, in which there is no night; and all the evils of dark-

ness in every sense are for ever excluded from that happy region, where knowledge, holiness, and joy, are all inseparable and immortal.

2. Remark. 'What light of every kind we are made partakers of here on earth, let us use it with holy thankfulness, with zeal and religious improvement.' Hereby we may be assisted and animated to travel on, through the mingled stages and scenes of light and darkness, in this world till we arrive at the inheritance of the saints in perfect light. It is a glorious blessing to this dark world, that the light of Christianity is added to the light of Judaism, and the light of nature; and that the law of Moses, and the gospel of Christ, are set before us in this nation in their distinct views, on purpose to make our way to happiness more evident and easy. May the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb, be sung in our land! But let us never rest satisfied, till the light that is let into our minds become a spring of divine life within us, a life of knowledge, holiness, and comfort. Let us not be found among the number of those, who, when 'light is come into the world, love darkness rather than light,' lest we fall under their condemnation. John iii. 19. Let us never rest till we see the evidences of the children of God wrought in us with power; till the 'day-spring that has visited us from on high' has entered into our spirits, and refined and moulded them into the divine image; till we who are by nature all 'darkness are made light in the Lord.'

O what a blessed change does the converting grace of Christ make in the soul of a son or daughter of Adam? It is like the beauty and pleasure which the rising morning diffuses over the face of the earth, after a night of storm and darkness: it is so much of heaven let into all the chambers of the soul. It is then only that we begin to know ourselves aright, and know God in his most awful and most lovely manifestations: it is in this light we see the hateful evil of every sin, the beauty of holiness, the worth of the gospel of Christ, and of his salvation. It is a light that carries divine heat and life with it; it renews all the powers of the spirit, and introduces holiness, hope and joy, in the room of folly and guilt, sin, darkness and sorrow.

3. Remark. If God has wrought this sacred and divine change in our souls, if we are made the children of

light, or if we profess to have felt this change, and hope for an interest in this bright inheritance of the saints, 'let us put away all the works of darkness with hatred and detestation.' "Let us walk in the light" of truth and holiness, Eph. v. 8. "Ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light." And the apostle repeats his exhortation to the Thessalonians in 1 Epist. 5th chapter and the 5th verse. 'Ye are all children of the light and of the day, and not the *sons of night or* darkness; therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober; putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation; for God hath not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.'

To animate every Christian to this holy care and watchfulness, let us think what a terrible disappointment it will be, after we have made a bright profession of Christianity in our lives, to lie down in death in a state of sin and guilt, and to awake in the world of spirits, in the midst of the groans and agonies of hell, surrounded and covered with everlasting darkness. Let our public profession be as illustrious and bright as it will, yet if we indulge works of darkness in secret, night and darkness will be our eternal portion, with the anguish of conscience and the terrors of the Almighty, without one glimpse of hope or relief. It is only those who walk in the light of holiness here, who can be fit to dwell in the presence of a God of holiness hereafter. 'Light is sown *only* for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart;' and it shall break out one day from among the clods, a glorious harvest; but only the sons and the daughters of light shall taste of the blessed fruits of it.

Think again with yourselves when you are tempted to sin and folly. What if I should be cut off on a sudden, practising the works of darkness, and my soul be summoned into the eternal world, covered with guilt and defilement? Shall I then be fit for the world of light? Will the God of light ever receive me to his dwelling? Do I not hereby render myself unfit company for the angels of light? and what if I should be sent down to dwell among the spirits of darkness, since I have imitated their sinful manners, and obeyed their cursed influence?

O may such thoughts as these dwell upon our spirits with

an awful solemnity, and be a perpetual guard against defiling our garments with any iniquity, lest our Lord should come and find us thus polluted. Let us walk onwards in the paths of light, which are discovered to us in the word of God, and which are illustrated by his holy ordinances, to guide us through the clouds and shades which attend us in this wilderness, till our Lord Jesus shall come with all his surrounding glories, and take us to the full possession of the inheritance in light.

4. Remark. 'Under our darkest nights, our most inactive and heavy hours, our most uncomfortable seasons here on earth, let us remember we are travelling to a world of light and joy.' If we happen to lie awake in midnight darkness, and count the tedious hours one after another, in a mournful succession, under any of the maladies of nature, or the sorrows of this life, let us comfort ourselves that we are not shut up in eternal night and darkness without hope, but we are still making our way towards that country where there is no night, where there is neither sin nor pain, malady nor sorrow.

What if the blessed God is pleased to try us, by the with-holding of light from our eyes for a season? What if we are called to seek our duty in dark providences, or are perplexed in deep and difficult controversies wherein we cannot find the light of truth? What if we 'sit in darkness' and mourning, 'and see no light,' and the beams of divine consolation are cut off? let us still 'trust in the name of the Lord, and stay ourselves upon our God,' especially as he manifests himself in the Lamb that was slain, the blessed medium of his mercy, Isa. 1. 10. Let us learn to say with the prophet Micah in the spirit of faith, Micah vii. 8, 9. "When I sit in darkness the Lord will be a light unto me; he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness."

Blessed be God that the night of ignorance, grief, or affliction, which attends us in this world, is not everlasting night. Heaven and glory are at hand; wait and watch for the morning star, for Jesus and the resurrection. Roll on apace in your appointed course ye suns and moons, and all ye twinkling enlighteners of the sky, carry on the changing seasons of light and darkness in this lower world with your utmost speed, till you have finished all my appointed months of continuance here. The light of faith shews me

the dawning of that glorious day, which shall finish all my nights and darknesses for ever. Make haste, O delightful morning, and delay not my hopes. Let me hasten, let me arrive at that blessed inheritance, those mansions of paradise, where night is never known, but one eternal day shall make our knowledge, our holiness, and our joy, eternal. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE VIII.

A SOUL PREPARED FOR HEAVEN.

2 Cor. v 5. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God.

When this apostle designs to entertain our hope in the noblest manner, and raise our faith to its highest joys, he generally calls our thoughts far away from all present and visible things, and sends them forward to the great and glorious day of the resurrection. He points our meditations to take a distant prospect of the final and complete happiness of the saints in Heaven, when their bodies shall be raised shining and immortal; whereas it is but seldom that he takes notice of the Heaven of separate souls, or that part of our future happiness which commences at the hour of death. But in this chapter the holy writer seems to keep both these heavens in his eye, and speaks of that blessedness which the spirits of the just shall enjoy in the 'presence of the Lord,' as soon as 'they are absent from the body;' and yet leads our souls onwards also to our last and most perfect state of happiness, which is delayed till our corruptible bodies shall be raised from the dust, and mortality shall be swallowed up in life. 'We know,' saith he in the first verse of this chapter, 'we know that as soon as our mortal tabernacle,' in which we now dwell, 'is dissolved, we have a building,' ready for us 'in the heavens;' i. e. an investiture in a glorious state of holiness and immortality, which waits to receive our spirits when we drop this dying flesh. Yet the felicities of this paradise, or first heaven, shall receive an unspeakable addition and advancement, when 'Christ shall come the second time,' with all his saints, to complete our salvation.

But which heaven soever we arrive at, whether it be this of the separate state, or that when our bodies shall be restored, still we must be 'wrought up' to a proper fitness for

it by God himself; and as the end of this verse tells us, he 'gives us his own Spirit as an earnest' of these future blessings.

The observation which shall be the subject of my discourse, is this: 'Those who shall enjoy the heavenly blessedness hereafter, must be prepared for it here in this world, by the operation of the blessed God.'

Here we must take notice in the first place, that since we are sinful and guilty creatures in ourselves, and have forfeited all our pretences to the favour of God and happiness, we must be restored to his favour, we must have our sins forgiven, we must be justified in his sight with an everlasting righteousness, we must be adopted as the children of God, and have a right and title given us to the heavenly inheritance, before we can enter into it, or possess it; and this blessing is procured for us by the obedience and death of the Son of God. It is in his blood that we find an atonement for our iniquities, and we must be made heirs of glory by becoming the adopted children of God, and so 'we are joint-heirs' with his Son Jesus, and shall be glorified with him, Rom. viii. 17.

And it is by a true and living faith in the Son of God, that we become partakers of this blessing. God has set forth his Son Jesus as a propitiation for sinners through faith in his blood, Rom. iii. 24. "We are justified by faith" in his blood, and "have hope of eternal life through him," Rom v. We also receive our adoption, and "become the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 26, and thereby we obtain a title to some mansion in our Father's house in heaven, since Jesus our elder brother, and our forerunner, is admitted into it to take a place there in our name. This is a very considerable part of our necessary preparation for the heavenly world, that we should be believers in the Son of God, and united to him by a living faith; and this faith also is 'the gift of God,' Eph. ii. 8. We are wrought up to it by his grace.

But as this does not seem to be the chief thing designed in the words of my text, I shall pass it over thus briefly, and apply myself to consider what that further fitness or preparation for heaven intends, for which we are said here 'to be wrought up by God' himself. The former preparation for heaven, may rather be said to be a 'relative change,' which is included in our pardon or justification, and alters

our state from the condemnation of hell, to the favour and love of God: but this latter preparation implies a real change of our nature by sanctifying grace, and gives us a temper of soul suited to the business and blessedness of the heavenly world. This is the 'preparation' which my text speaks of.

The great enquiry therefore at present is, 'What are those steps, or gradual operations, by which the blessed God works us up to this fitness for heaven?'

And here I shall not run over all the parts and lineaments of the new creature, which is formed by regeneration, nor the particular operations of converting grace, whereby we are convinced of sin, and led to faith and repentance, and new obedience, though these are all necessary to this end; but I shall confine myself only to those things which have a more immediate reference to the heavenly blessedness; and they are such as follow:

1. 'God works us up to a preparation for the heavenly felicity, by establishing and confirming our belief, that there is a heaven provided for the saints, and by giving us some clearer acquaintance with the nature, the business, and the blessedness of this heaven.' All this is done by the gospel of Christ, and by the secret operation of the blessed God, teaching us to understand his gospel.

Alas! how ignorant were the heathen sages about any future state for the righteous? how bewildered were the best of them in all their imaginations? how vain were all their reasonings upon this subject, and how little satisfaction could they give to an honest enquirer, whether there was any reward provided for good men beyond this life? The light of nature was their guide; and those in whom this feeble taper burnt with the fairest lustre, were still left in great darkness about futurity. As the Gentile philosophers were left in great uncertainties whether there was any heaven or not, so were their conceptions of heavenly things very absurd and ridiculous; and their various fancies about the nature and enjoyments of it, were all impertinence.

And how little knowledge had the Patriarchs themselves, if we may judge of their knowledge by the five books of Moses, which give no plain and express promise

of future happiness in another world, neither to Abel nor Noah, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or to Moses himself? And were it not for some expressions in the New Testament, and by the xith chapter to the Hebrews, where we are told, that these good men 'sought a heavenly country,' and hoped for happiness in a future and invisible state, we should sometimes be ready to doubt whether they knew almost any thing of the future resurrection and glory.

That great and excellent man Job had one or two lucid intervals of peculiar brightness, which shone upon him from heaven, in the midst of his distresses, and raised him above and beyond the common level of the dispensation he lived in; yet, in the main, when he describes the state of the dead, how desolate and dolesome is his language, and what heavy darkness hangs upon his hope! See his expression, Job x. 21, 22, "Let me alone that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death, a land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death without any order, and where the light is as dark ness." Mark how this good man heaps one darkness upon another, and makes so formidable a gloom as was hardly to be dispelled by the common notices given to men in that age.

And if we look into the Jewish writings in and after the days of Moses, we find the men of righteousness frequently entertained with promises of corn, and wine, and oil, and other blessings of sense; and few there were amongst them who saw clearly, and firmly believed the heavenly inheritance through the types, and shadows, and figures of Canaan, the promised land, which flowed with milk and honey.*

* There is no difficulty in believing, that the views of the Old Testament saints were limited and obscure, concerning many things upon which the gospel has shed a more powerful and consoling light. But we cannot agree in thinking that they were altogether so much in the dark, as some good men have imagined them. Job's ideas of a resurrection seem to have been as clear and as comfortable as any which we possess; although some circumstances connected with that event, and which have been since revealed, were most probably unknown to him. He could say, nevertheless, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold,

It is granted there are some hints and discoveries of a blessedness beyond the grave in the writings of David, Isaiah, Daniel, and some of the Prophets: but the brightest of these notices fall far short of what the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ has set before us. The Son of God who came down from heaven, where he had lived from before the creation of this world, has revealed to us infinitely more of the invisible state than all that went before him. He tells us of the 'pure in heart enjoying the sight of God,' and conversing with 'Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,' the ancient saints. He assures us there 'are many mansions in his Father's house,' and that he 'went to prepare a place' there for his followers. "I tell you" says he, John viii. 38, "I tell you the things which I have seen with my Father." And when he came again from the dead, he made it appear to his disciples that he had "brought life and immortality to light by his gospel," 2 Tim. i. 10.

It is only the New Testament that gives us so bright and satisfactory an account what our future heaven is. The 'righteous shall be with God,' *shall* behold him, *shall* dwell with Christ, and see his glory; *they shall* worship day and night in his temple, *and sing the praises of him* that sits upon the throne, and of the Lamb that has redeemed them by his blood; there shall be no sin, no sorrow,

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and not another." Job xix. 25—27.† Even Balaam, at a later age, although a "stranger to the covenants of promise," could say, in view of the hopes which support the godly man in death, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Num. xxiii. 10. We have not sufficient ground to infer from the silence of scripture, that the ancient Jews were ignorant of the spiritual things, which were typified by their rites, observances, and peculiar privileges. We find from various passages of the New Testament, that they were acquainted with particulars, and actuated by views, which are not expressly attributed to them in the Old Testament records. See, for example, John viii. 56. Heb. xi. Jude 14, 15. In Heb. xi. 9, 10, it is intimated that Abraham had some view of the typical reference of the promised land, as the pledge of a better inheritance: and if this was known to him, we should not rashly impute ignorance of it to his pious descendants.—Ed.

† Annexed are two translations of this remarkable passage.

"I am sure that my redeemer liveth;
And that I shal ryse out of the earth in the latter daye;
That I shal be clothed againe with this skynne:
And se God in my flesh.
Yee, I myself shal beholde him,
Not with other, but with these same eyes." COVERDALE.

"I know that my Redeemer (*is*) living,
And that at the last (*day*)
He will arise (*in judgment*) upon dust (*mankind*).
And after my skin be mangled thus,
Yet ever from my flesh shall I see God;
Whom I shall see for me (*on my side*)
And mine eyes shall behold him not estranged." HALES.

no death, nor any more pain ; they shall have such satisfactions and employments as are worthy of a rational nature, and a soul refined from sense and sin. St. Paul, one of his disciples, was transported into the third heaven before he died, and there learnt "unspeakable things," 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4; and he, together with the other Apostles, have published the glories of that future world which they learnt from Jesus their Lord, and confirmed these things to our faith by prophecies and miracles without number.

Now the blessed God himself prepares his own people for this heaven of happiness by giving them a full conviction and assurance of the truth of all these divine discoveries; he impresses them upon their heart with power, and makes them attend to those divine impressions. Every true Christian has learnt to say within himself, 'This celestial blessedness is no dream, is no painted vision, no gay scene of flattering fancy, nor is it a matter of doubtful dispute, or of uncertain opinion. I am assured of it from the words of Christ the Son of God, and from his blessed followers, whom he authorised to teach me the things of a future world.' He that is taught of God beholds these glories in the light of a divine faith, which is to him the "substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not yet seen," Heb. xi. 1.

2. God works up the souls of his people to a preparation for the heavenly state, by 'purifying them from every defilement that might unfit them for the blessedness of heaven.' The removal of the guilt of sin by his pardoning mercy I have mentioned before, as necessary to our entrance into the heavenly state ; and we must walk through this world, this defiling world with all holy watchfulness, lest our soul be blemished with new pollutions, lest new guilt come upon our consciences, and the thoughts of appearance before God be terrible to us. That soul is very much unfit for an entrance into the presence of a holy God, who is ever plunging itself into new circumstances of guilt, by a careless and unholy conversation. To stand upon the borders of life, and the very edge of eternity, will be dreadful to those who have given themselves loose to criminal pleasures, and indulged their irregular appetites and passions.

But it is not only a conscience purged from the guilt of sin by the blood of Christ, but a soul washed also from

the defiling power and taint of sin, by the sanctifying Spirit that is necessary to make us meet for the heavenly inheritance. This is that purification which I now chiefly intend ;, Matth. v. 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Nothing that defileth must enter into the city of God on high, nor whosoever maketh a lie or loveth it, Rev. xxi. 27. No injustice, no falsehood, no guile or deceit can be admitted within those gates. They must be without guile both in their heart and tongue, if they will "stand before the throne of God," Rev. xiv. 5 : sincerity and truth of soul, with all the beauties of an upright heart and character, are necessary to prepare an inhabitant for that blessed state. There must be no envy, no wrath or malice, no revenge; nor will any of the angry principles that dwell in our flesh and blood, or that inflame and disturb the mind, be found in those regions of peace and love. There must be no pride or ambition, no self-exaltation and vanity that can dwell in heaven, for it cast out the angels of glorious degree, when they would exalt themselves above their own station. 'Pride was the condemnation of the devil,' and it must not dwell in a human heart that ever hopes for a heavenly dwelling-place, 1 Tim. iii. 6, and Jude ver. 6. There must be no sensual and intemperate creature there, no covetous selfishness, no irregular passions, no narrowness of soul, no uncharitable and party spirit will ever be found in that country of diffusive love and joy.

And since the best of Christians have had the seeds of many of these iniquities in their hearts, and they have made a painful complaint of these rising corruptions of nature upon many occasions, these iniquities must be mortified and slain by the work of the Spirit of God within us, if ever we ourselves would live the divine life of heaven, Rom. viii. 33. There is a great deal of this purifying work to be done in the souls of all of us, before we can be prepared for the heavenly world, and though we cannot arrive at perfection here, yet we must be wrought up to a temper in some measure fit to enter into that blessedness : and God is training his people up for this purpose all the days of their travels through this desert world. Happy souls, who feel themselves more and more released from the bonds of these iniquities, day by day, and thereby feel within themselves the growing evidences of a joyful hope!

3. God does not only purify us from every sin in order to prepare us for heaven, but 'he is ever loosening and weaning our hearts from all those lawful things in this life, which are not to be enjoyed in heaven.' Our sensual appetites, and our carnal desires, so far as they are natural, though not sinful, must die before we can enter into eternal life. 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit' that divine, incorruptible, and refined happiness. Riches and treasures of gold and silver which the 'rust can corrupt, and which thieves can break through and steal,' are not provided for the heavenly state: they are all of the earthly kind, and too mean for the relish of a heavenly spirit. Although a Christian may possess many of these things in the present life, yet his affections must be divested of them, and his soul divided from them, if he would be a saint indeed, and ever ready for the purer blessings of paradise. The businesses, the cares and the concerns of this secular life, are ready to drink up our spirits too much while we are here; we are too prone to mingle our very souls with them, and thereby grow unfit for heavenly felicities: and therefore it is that our Saviour has warned us, Luke xxi. 34, "Let not your hearts be overcharged with the cares of this world," any more than "with surfeiting and drunkenness," if you would be always ready for your flight to a better state, and meet the summons of your Lord to paradise.

There are also many curious speculations and delightful amusements which may lawfully entertain us while we are here; there are sports and recreations which may divert the flesh or the mind in a lawful manner, whilst we dwell in tabernacles of flesh and blood, and are encompassed with mortal things. But the soul that is wrought up for heaven must arise to an holy indifference to all the entertainments of flesh and sense, and time, if it would put on the appearance of an heavenly inhabitant. Christians, that would be ever ready for the glories of a better world, must be such in some measure as the Apostle describes, 1 Cor. vii. 30. &c. They must 'rejoice' with such moderation in their dearest comforts of life 'as though they rejoiced not;' they must weep and mourn for the loss of them with such a divine self-government 'as though they wept not;' they must 'buy as though they possessed not;' they must 'use this world as not abusing it' in any instance, but must look upon the fashions and the scenes of it

as vanishing things, and have their hearts "set on the things that are above, where Christ Jesus is at the Father's right hand," Colos. iii. 1, 2.

If you ask me, what methods the blessed God uses in order to attain these ends, and to purify and refine the soul for heaven? I answer, he sometimes does it by sharp strokes of affliction, making our interests in the creature bitter to us, that we may be weaned from the relish of them, and the power of divine grace must accompany all his weaning providences, or the work will not be done.

Sometimes again he weans the soul from the lawful things of the world, by permitting our earthly enjoyments to plunge us into difficulties, to seize the heart with anxieties, or to surround us with sore temptations. Then, when we feel ourselves falling into sin, and bruised or defiled thereby, we lose our former gust of pleasure in them; and when we are recovered by divine grace, we are more effectually weaned from such kind of temptations for the future; but it is impossible in the compass of a few lines to describe the various methods which the blessed God uses to wean the spirit from all its earthly attachments, and to work it up to a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Blessed souls, who are thus loosened and weaned from sensible things, though it be done by painful sufferings!

4. The great God not only weans our hearts from those things that are not to be enjoyed in heaven, but he 'gives us a holy appetite and relish suited to the provisions of the heavenly world, and raises our desires and tendencies of soul towards them.' By nature our minds are estranged from God, and from all that is divine and holy; we have no desires after his love, nor delight in the thought of dwelling with God: but when divine grace has effectually touched the heart, it ever tends upwards to that world of holiness and peace. So the needle, when it is touched by the load-stone, ever points to the beloved pole-star, and seems uneasy when it is diverted from it, nor will it rest till it return thither again.

Do the sweet sensations of divine love make up a great part of the heavenly blessedness? The soul is in some measure fitted for it, who can say with David in Psal. iv. 7, "Lord lift thou up upon me the light of thy countenance, and it shall rejoice" my heart "more than if corn

and wine, and oil abounded," and all earthly blessings were multiplied upon me; for in thy love is the life of my soul, and thy "loving-kindness is better than life," Psal. lxiii.

Is the felicitating presence of God to be enjoyed in the future world, and shall we see his face there with unspeakable delight? Then those souls are prepared for heaven, who can say with the Psalmist, Psal. xlii. 2, "When shall I come and appear before God?" When shall I have finished my travels through this wilderness, that I may arrive at my Father's house? "This one thing have I desired, that I may dwell in the house of God *for ever* to behold the beauty of the Lord there," Psal. xxvii. 4. It is enough for me that I shall "behold thy face in righteousness, and I shall be satisfied when I awake" out of the dust "with thy likeness. With my soul have I desired thee, O Lord, in the night," in the darkness of this desert world I have longed for the light of thy face, "and with my spirit within me I will seek thee early. Whom have I in heaven but thee, neither is there any on earth that I desire beside thee," Psal. xvii. Isa. xxvi. Psal. lxxiii. O when shall the day come when there shall be no more distance and estrangement of my heart from God, but I shall feel all my powers for ever near him?

Is the sweet society of Jesus to be enjoyed in the heavenly region? Then those are prepared for this happiness who feel in themselves "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better" than the most pleasurable scenes on earth, Phil. i. 23. "I am willing" and rejoice in the thought of it "rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 8. I behold in the light of faith the dawning glory of that day, when Jesus shall return from heaven, when he shall revisit this wretched world, and put an end to these wretched scenes of vanity. "Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him." He comes into our world "to them that look for him," not to be made a sacrifice for sin, but to complete our salvation. I long to behold him, and I love the thought of his appearance, Rev. i. Heb. ix. 2 Tim. iv. &c.

Is there not only a freedom from pain and sorrow among the saints on high, but is there also an eternal release from all the bonds of sin and temptation? Then

that soul discovers a degree of preparation for it, who can say with an holy groan and grief of heart, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?" Rom. vii. "In this tabernacle we groan *indeed* being burdened, and are desirous rather to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," with our holy state of immortality, 2 Cor. v.

5. That God who has wrought these divine breathings in the soul will one day fulfil them all, and he is working up the Christian to a blessed meetness for this felicity, by awakening these wishes in the very centre of the heart. Happy heart, which feels these holy aspirations, these divine breathings!

6. The blessed God is pleased to work us up to a preparation for the heavenly world 'by forming the temper of our minds into a likeness to the inhabitants of heaven,' i. e. to God himself, to Christ Jesus the Son of God, to angels and saints, to the spirits of the just made perfect. From the children of folly and sin we must be transformed into the children of God, we must be created anew after his image, and resemble our heavenly Father, that we may be capable of enjoying his love, and rejoicing in his presence. We must be conformable to the image of his only begotten Son Christ Jesus, and walk and live as he did in this world, that we may be prepared to dwell with him in the world to come, Rom. viii. 29; 1 John iv. 17. We must have the same temper and spirit of holiness wrought in us, that we may be imitators of all the holy ones that dwell in heaven, and that we may be followers of the saints who have been strangers and travellers in this world in all former ages.

How can we hope to have free conversation with glorious beings, which are so unlike to ourselves, as God, and Christ, and angels are unlike to the sinful children of men? How can we imagine ourselves to be fit company for such pure and perfect beings, beauteous, and shining in holiness, while we are defiled with the iniquities of our natures, and ever falling into new guilt and pollution? Happy souls, who can say through grace, 'I have walked in the light as God is in the light,' and I trust, O Father, I shall dwell for ever with thee there. I have been a follower of the Lamb through the thorny and rugged passages of this wilderness, and I humbly hope I shall sit

with thee, O Jesus, upon a throne glorious and holy. I have been a companion of them who have finished the Christian race, who have fought the good fight, and obtained the victory, and I trust I shall have a name and a place amongst all you holy ones who have fought and overcome. O for a heart and tongue furnished for such appeals to all the blessed inhabitants of paradise, the possessors of those mansions on high!

7. The grace of God works us up to a preparation for heaven 'by carrying us through those trials and sufferings, those labours and conflicts here in this life, which will not only make heaven the sweeter to us, but will make it more honorable for God himself to bestow this heaven upon us.'

When the spirits of a creature are almost worn out with the toilsome labours of the day, what an additional sweetness does he find in rest and repose? What an inward relish and satisfaction to the soul, that has been fatigued under a long and tedious war with sins and temptations, to be transported to such a place where sin cannot follow them, and temptation can never reach them? How will it enhance all the felicities of the heavenly world when we enter into it, to feel ourselves released from all the trials and distresses and sufferings which we have sustained in our travels thitherwards? The review of the waves and the storms wherein we had been tossed for a long season, and had been almost shipwrecked there, will make the peaceful haven of eternity, to which we shall arrive, much more agreeable to every one of the sufferers, 2 Cor. iv. 17. "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are" in this way "working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and preparing us for the possession of it.

But it should be added also, that the prize of life, and the crown of glory, is much more honourably bestowed on those who have been long fighting, running, and labouring to obtain it. Heaven will appear as a condecent* reward of all the faithful servants of God upon earth, and a divine recompence of their labours and sufferings, 2 Thes. i. 6. 'As it is a righteous thing with God to recompence tribulation to them that trouble you, so to give to those who are troubled rest' and salvation.

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* Fit, becoming, appropriate.—Ed.

This is that equitable or condecent fitness that God, as governor of the world, has wisely appointed and made necessary before our entrance into heaven. Christ himself our forerunner, and the 'captain of our salvation, was made perfect through his sufferings,' and was trained up for his throne on high by enduring the contradiction of sinners, and the variety of agonies which attended his life and death in this lower world, this stage of conflict and sufferings. See Heb. ii. 10, and xii. 1.

Though we cannot pretend by our labours in the race to have merited the prize, yet we must labour through the race before we receive it. Our conflicts cannot pretend to have deserved the crown which is promised, but we must fight the battles of the Lord before we obtain it. This was St. Paul's encouragement and hope, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give me, and not to me only, but to all those who love his appearance." There is a great deal of divine wisdom in this appointment, that the children of God may be "counted in this sense, worthy of his kingdom for which they also suffer," 2 Thes. i. 5, and that the relish of those satisfactions may be doubled to all the sufferers.

8. God yet further prepares and works up his people for heaven, by 'teaching them some of the employments of the heavenly world, and initiating and inuring them to the practice thereof.' Is the 'contemplation of the blessed God' in his nature and his various perfections the business of glorified souls? God teaches his children, whom he is training up for glory, to practice this holy contemplation. He fixes their thoughts upon the wonders of his nature and his grace, his works of creation and providence, the blessings of his redeeming love by his Son Jesus, and the terrors of his justice which shall be executed by the same hand, while the soul at the same time can appeal to God with holy delight, 'My meditation of thee shall be sweet indeed;' O may I dwell for ever in the midst of thy light, and see all thy wondrous glories diffused around me, and make my joys everlasting!

Are we told that heaven consists also in "beholding the glory of Christ?" John xvii. 24. And how happily does

God prepare his saints for this part of heaven, by filling their thoughts with the various graces and honours of Jesus the Saviour? And when they are in their lonely retirements, they trace the footsteps of their Beloved through all his labours and sorrows in this mortal state, even from his cradle to his cross; they follow him in their holy meditations to his agonies in the garden, to his anguish of soul there; through all his sufferings in death, through the grave his bed of darkness, and trace him on still to his glorious resurrection, and to his ascent to his Father's house, when a bright cloud like a chariot bore him up to heaven with attending angels. 'This is my beloved,' says the soul, and 'this is my friend,' whom I shall see with joy in the upper world. He is altogether lovely, and he demands my highest love.

Is it part of the happiness of heaven to 'converse with the blessed God by holy addresses of acknowledgements and praise,' as it is described in Rev. iv. and v. and vii.? "They are before the throne of God day and night, and serve him in his temple;" and join with holy joy to pronounce that divine song, "Blessing and honour, and glory and power, be to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever: worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory and honour, for thou hast created all things for thy pleasure: worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and strength, glory and blessing; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood out of every kindred and nation." Now it is evident that those whose hearts and lips are joyfully fitted to pronounce this holy song, and to join in this harmony, are fitted also for these blessed employments of the heavenly state. And yet at the same time they abase themselves in the dust of humility, and with the living creatures or angels they fall down before the throne, and with the elders they cast down their crowns at his foot, they confess themselves the sons of earth and dust, and would appear as nothing while God is all, Rev. iv. 9, 10. and v. 8.

Are all the powers of glorified nature in heaven active in the unknown services of God and Christ there? So the saints are trained up for this service and this activity here on earth, by diligence and delight in their less noble employments, the inferior labors and duties that provi-

dence demands of them here, whereby they are prepared for more glorious employment on high; for heaven is no idle or unactive state.

Do some of the satisfactions of the heavenly world arise from the 'sweet society of the blessed above, their fervent love to each other, their mutual delight in holy converse, the joy that arises in the heart of each upon a survey of the happiness of all the holy and blessed inhabitants? Does benevolence and goodness of every kind overflow in the heavenly world?' It is plain that God is training up his own children for this blessedness, by employing them in this manner while they are here below. He is in some measure fitted for this heaven, who can say, the 'saints are the excellent of the earth, in whom is all my delight:' I love them from my soul, because they love my God and my Saviour. I see the image of the Father, and of Jesus his Son in them, and I cannot but love that image wheresoever I behold it. I feel myself ready to rejoice when my fellow christians partake of joy, and I long for that temper of mind when I shall delight myself in the felicity of all my fellow saints in perfection, and shall make their heaven a part of my own. But I proceed not here, because this would anticipate what I design hereafter.

9. God is pleased to work up his people to a preparation for the heavenly state, by 'giving them a pledge and earnest of the blessedness of heaven,' that is, by sending his own Spirit into their hearts under this very character, both as the spring of divine life, and as the evidence of our hope, and sometimes bestowing upon them such 'foretastes of the heavenly world,' by the operations of his holy Spirit, which are too joyful and glorious to be fully expressed in mortal language; but we shall attempt something of it in another discourse.

I proceed now to seek what inferences or edifying remarks may be made upon our meditations thus far.

Rem. 1. We learn from my text 'what are the brightest, the plainest, and the surest evidences of our interest in the heavenly blessedness. Are we trained up to it, and prepared for it?' Has the blessed God wrought up our souls to any hopeful degrees of this preparation? Has he in any measure made us meet for this inheritance of the saints in light?

I grant the scripture teaches us, that it is by a true and

living faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, that we obtain a title to eternal life, according to the proposals of the covenant of grace in the gospel ; but our preparation for heaven by a holy and heavenly temper of mind and conduct of life, is the fairest and most uncontested evidence of the truth and life of our faith, and such a proof of it as will stand the test both in life and death, in this world, and in the world to come. If we would manifest our faith in Christ to be sincere and genuine and effectual for our salvation, we must make it appear that we are growing up into the image of Christ in all things, we must be formed after the likeness of the Son of God, who is our great example, and our fore-runner into heaven ; and where this evidence is found the soul cannot fail of salvation. Wheresoever there is this fitness for the joys on high, God will assuredly bestow these divine pleasures. It is for such souls that he has prepared a heaven, and when he has prepared such souls for the heavenly world, he will surely bring them to the possession of it.

Of how great moment and importance is it then for each of us to examine ourselves with watchful diligence and sincerity, whether we are in any measure fitted for the blessedness above : and to this end we may run over in our enquiries all the former steps of preparation.

Let us enquire of our souls then, Am I so fully persuaded of this state of future happiness, as to resolve this shall be my aim, this my everlasting pursuit? Have we seen this blessedness in the various representations of it in the word of God, as the most amiable and desirable thing, and have we set our faces to travel thither with an holy purpose and determination, through grace, never to tire, or grow weary till we arrive at the enjoyment of it? Have we fixed our hope and expectation upon the blessed promises in the word, and are we by these promises endeavouring daily to cleanse ourselves from all defilements of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God? Do we obtain any victories over our spiritual enemies, and maintain our pious conflicts against all the oppositions which we meet with in our way? Do we labour to suppress every rising ferment of envy, pride, wrath, sensuality, and those corrupt appetites and passions which render us unfit for that holy and heavenly world? Are our hearts daily more mortified to the things of this world,

the enjoyments of flesh and sense, which are not to be found in heaven? Are our hearts more weaned from the sensual satisfactions and intemperate delights of the animal life? Are we dead to the temptations of gold and silver, the grandeurs and the gaieties, and splendors of this present low life of flesh and blood, which are no part nor portion of the heavenly felicity? Do we view the tempting things of this world with an holy indifference, and possess and use them with affections so calm and so cool, as becomes a rank of beings that have a nobler, a richer, and a more exalted hope? Have we found the labours and burdens, the sorrows and afflictions of the present state, happy instruments to prepare us for the blessedness above, by curing all our vain and carnal desires? Are we in any measure imitators of those who have gone before us through faith and patience, and are made possessors of the promised joy? Are we "followers of God as dear children?" Have we the image of our heavenly Father created anew in us, and do we walk as our Lord Jesus Christ also walked, while he was in this wilderness travelling to his Father's house? Are our earnest desires towards this sort of felicity excited and raised high? Have we a strong tendency of soul to the holy enjoyments of the upper world? Do we sigh and groan after a complete freedom from sin, and a deliverance from every temptation? Do we employ ourselves with pleasure in the work and business of heaven, in the holy contemplation of God, in a delightful survey of the person and offices of his Son Jesus, his wondrous condescension, and his amazing compassion? Do we take pleasure in conversing with God our Father by holy addresses of praise and thankfulness? Do we love all the saints, and delight in their society, and do we rejoice to spend our time with them in heavenly conversation, though they may be among the lower ranks of life here on earth? And do we diffuse our love through all who wear the image of God, and take a pleasing satisfaction of soul in their increase in holiness, and rejoice in their joys?

If God has thus fitted thee, O Christian, in this manner for the mansions of the happy world, then surely he has set thee apart for himself, he has begun eternal life in thee, the dawn of eternal glory is risen upon thee, and he will bring thee into the complete noon of blessedness, into the

overflowing light of divine beatitudes. "Arise and shine," O Christian, for thy light is come, "the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee;" thou hast no need to ascend into heaven to search for thy evidences among the decrees of God, and to pry into the rolls of electing grace; for if thou hast been transformed into an heavenly temper, thy name is surely written in the Lamb's book of life; heaven is begun within thee, and God will fulfil his own work.

Rem. 2. 'What a solid comfort is it to poor mourning, troubled, afflicted souls under all their sorrows, their frailties, their temptations, and infirmities here on earth, that they have a clear evidence of heaven within them.' This is such a peace as Jesus Christ left to his disciples by legacy, John xiv. 27. "Such as the world cannot give," and such as the world cannot take away.

This is a spring of constant and divine consolation to those who seem to be worn out with old age or infirmities of nature, and who complain they are fit for no service in this world; but if they can feel in themselves this holy fitness for the enjoyments of heaven, they have a rich and living fountain of pleasure in their own breasts, ever springing, ever flowing, and such as will follow them with daily supplies of pleasure, if they are not wanting to themselves, through all this wilderness, till they arrive at that land were all the rivers of blessing meet and join in a full stream, to make the inhabitants for ever happy.

It may be, O Christian, thou art afraid that thou hast felt but little of this divine preparation; thou seest so many defects in thyself daily, so much unlikeness to God, so much working of iniquity, such restless efforts of the body of sin, so much prevalence of temptation, so much coldness in duty, such deadness in acts of devotion, such frequent returns of guilt and pain in a tender conscience, and so many enemies to struggle with every step of thy way to heaven, that thou art greatly discouraged and afraid this divine preparation is not wrought in thee. Enquire then yet further, are all these melancholy scenes both within and without, the matter of thy sincere grief and burden? Canst thou say in this tabernacle, I groan, being burdened with the body of sin, as well as with the frailties and pains of nature? Canst thou say sincerely, that thy inmost desires are towards God and his glory in the present life, and towards his enjoyment in the life to come?

Dost thou maintain a constant converse with heaven as well as thou canst, though it be so much broken, and so often painfully interrupted? Hast thou a continual and settled aversion and hatred to sin, and a holy jealousy and fear of its defilements? Hast thou a restless breathing of soul after greater likeness to God, and greater communion with him? Dost thou delight in spiritual and holy conversation; and does thy zeal for the honour of God and his Son Jesus, carry thee forth to those actions which are suitable to thy station, for the advancement of religion in the world? Be assured then that God is training thee up for this heavenly state, and has in some measure prepared thee for it. God has begun in thee the business and blessedness of the upper world. In the midst of all thy sorrows and complaints here below, peace be with thee, and joy in the Lord, for thy salvation and thy felicity shall be completed.

Rem. 3. 'How vain, and idle, and unreasonable are all the hopes of sinners, that they shall ever arrive at heaven without any preparation for it here?' There is nothing divine and holy begun in them in this world, and yet they hope to be made happy in the world that is to come; there is nothing of true grace in their hearts here, and yet they vainly expect to be made perfect in pleasure and glory hereafter.

Think with thyself, O carnal creature, that heaven will be a burden to thee; the powers, the appetites, and passions of thy sinful nature, will not suffer thee to relish the joys of the heavenly state. Dost thou imagine that a worm or serpent of the earth, or a swine which is ever tumbling in the mire, can be entertained with the golden ornaments and splendors of a palace? Or will the stupid ass be delighted with the harmony of a harp or viol? No more can a soul of a carnal and sensual taste, and which is ever seeking and groveling after earthly gratifications, be pleased or gratified with the refined enjoyments of the heavenly world. Thou must have a new nature, new appetites and affections, ere thou canst partake of divine joys, or relish them if thou wert placed in the midst of them. Holy adoration of God, and humble converse with him in worship, converse with the saints about divine things, perfect purity and devotion, with the meditation of the excellencies of Christ, and the sight of him in his ordinances, have

never yet been the object of thy delight or joy; nay they have rather been thine aversion; and shouldst thou have the gates of heaven open before thee, and see what business the holy souls there are employed in, thou wouldst find no desire to such sort of satisfactions; the place and the company would be thy burden, if thou couldst be let at once into the midst of them.

Think again, O sinful wretch, thy carnality of soul, thy supreme love of sensual and brutal joys, the secret malice or envy, the pride and impiety of thy heart, have prepared thee for another sort of company; thou art fitted for hell by the very temper of thy spirit, for such are the inhabitants of that miserable world, and in thy present state there can be no admission for thee into heaven. Thou hast treasured up food for the worm that never dies, for the eternal anguish of conscience; thou hast made thyself fit fuel by indulgence of thy sinful and rebellious appetites and passions, for the fiery indignation of God; and every day thou persistest in this state, thy preparation for the dark regions of sin and sorrow is increased. But this leads me to the last remark.

Rem. 4. 'How dangerous a thing it is for a sinner to continue a day longer in a state so unprepared for the heavenly world.' Dost thou not know, whilst we are inhabitants in these regions of mortality, we are borderers upon death; and if we are unprepared for heaven, we are borderers upon damnation and hell? Our life is but a vapour, and the next puff may blow us away into the regions of everlasting darkness, misery, and despair.

Alas! how much of this divine preparation do the best of saints stand in need of for an immediate entrance into heaven? What care do they take, how constant are their labours, and how fervent their prayers to increase in this divine fitness, in these holy and heavenly qualifications? And dost thou vainly imagine to exchange earth for heaven at once, and to be received into the pure and holy mansions of paradise without any conformity to God or Christ, or the rest of the inhabitants of that world.

Objection. But some idle and slothful creatures will be ready to object and say, If it be God who creates his people anew, according to his own image, and fits them for heaven: if we must be wrought up by his power and grace for the participation of this glory, what can we do

towards it ourselves? Or why are we charged and exhorted to prepare ourselves for heaven? Since then it is God that must do this work, why may we not lie still, and wait till his grace shall prepare us?

I answer, no, by no means; for God is wont to exert his grace only while creatures are in the use of his appointments, and fulfil their duty. This language therefore, and these excuses, seem to be the mere cavils of a carnal mind, or the voice of sloth and indolence. Those who have no inclination to prepare themselves for the joys of the heavenly state, may wait and expect divine influences in vain, if they will never stir up themselves to practise what is in their power, and to attempt what the gospel of grace demands.

In almost all the transactions of God with men, it is the way of his wisdom to join our diligence and his grace together; and there are many Scriptures that give us sufficient notice of this. See how St. Paul argues with the Philippians, and stirs them up to zeal and activity in securing their own salvation by the hope of divine assistances, Phil. ii. 12, 13. "Work out your own salvation, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do." So said David to his son Solomon, when he appointed him to build the temple of the Lord, 1 Chron. xxviii. 20, "Be strong and of good courage, and do it,—for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee, and will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work." This was the charge also that God gave to his people Israel, Lev. xx. 7, 8, "Sanctify yourselves and be ye holy, keep my statutes; I am the Lord who sanctifieth you." So the Psalmist tells us, Psal. iv. 3, "The Lord hath set apart, *or separated* him who is godly for himself;" and yet, 2 Cor. vi. 17, The Lord commands his people to "separate themselves" unto him, to "come out from among" the sinners of this world; and "be you separate," saith the Lord, "and I will receive you." So in other places of Scripture, divine wisdom commands sinners to fulfil their duty, Prov. i. 23, "Turn ye at my reproof;" and yet in the 80th Psalm, the church prays, "Turn us, O Lord, and we shall be saved." The case is very much the same even in the things that relate to this life, wherein divine assistance and blessing are connected with our diligence in duty. Solomon tells us, Prov. x. 4, "The hand of the dil-

igent maketh rich;" and yet ver. 22, it is "the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich also." We can never expect the favours of heaven, unless we are zealous to obey the commands of heaven.

When the sinful children of men are found waiting on God in his own appointed ordinances, then they are in the fairest way to receive divine communications, and be transformed into saints. If the blind man had not obeyed the voice of Christ, John ix. 7, and washed himself 'in the pool of Siloam,' he could not expect to have received his eye-sight. If the man with the withered hand, Matth. xii. 10, 13, had not used his own endeavours to 'stretch forth his hand' at the command of Christ, I can hardly believe it would have been restored to its ancient vigour and usefulness. If the poor impotent creature had not been waiting at the side of the 'pool in Bethesda,' John v. he had not met with the blessed Jesus, nor been healed by his miraculous power. You will say, perhaps, that our blessed Saviour could have visited him in his own house, could have directed his journey towards his habitation, or have sent for him into the public, and healed him there. No, our Lord did not choose either of these ways; but while the man was waiting at the pool, where he had encouragement to hope for a cure, there the Lord found him, and healed him.

Let not any presuming sinner therefore, who is sensible of his own unfitness for heaven, dare to continue in a careless indifference about so important a concern. Let him not put off his own conscience with this foolish excuse, 'It is God that must do all in us and for us, and therefore I will do nothing myself.' Dost thou think, O soul, that this will be a sufficient answer to him that shall judge thee in the great and solemn day? May you not expect to hear the Judge reply terribly to such an excuse, 'You never sought after this preparation for heaven, and you must be plunged into hell, for which your own rebellion and slothfulness have prepared you.'

But perhaps you will *object* again, what can so feeble, so sinful a creature as I am, do towards this divine work?

I *answer*, Canst thou not separate one quarter of an hour daily to think of thy dreadful circumstances, and thine eternal danger in a sinful and defiled state of soul? Think of the uncertainty of life, and how sudden thy sum-

mons may be into the eternal and unchangeable state. Survey thyself in thy sinful condition both of heart and life, and see how unfit thou art for the company of all the holy ones above. Meditate on these thy perilous circumstances, till thy heart be deeply affected therewith; fall down before God in humble acknowledgment of thy former guilt and pollutions; give up thyself to him with holy solemnity, to have thy heart turned away from every sin, and strongly inclined to holiness and heaven. Commit thy soul, guilty and defiled as it is, into the hands of Jesus the Mediator; entrust thy case with him as an all-sufficient Saviour; entreat that he would cleanse thee from all thy guilt and pollution, by the blood of his sacrifice, and the grace of his Spirit; that blood of atonement which has procured for sinners pardon and peace with God, and those operations of his grace which may sanctify thy sinful nature. Address thyself to the exalted Saviour for healing influences from his hand, to cure all the maladies of thy soul, to form thee after his image, and to make thee a son of God. Pray with holy importunity for this necessary and divine blessing; wait on God in secret and in public; give him no rest night nor day till he has renewed thy soul, and transformed thee into a new creature, and given thee a relish of the heavenly enjoyments. Dwell at the throne of grace till thou feelest thy heart drawn upward and heavenward, and watch against every thing that would defile thy soul anew, or make thee unfit to enter into the company of the blessed.

Permit me here to dwell a little upon those *motives* that should awaken thee to bethink thyself ere it be too late, before the grave has shut its mouth upon thee, and thou art consigned to the place of eternal misery. Awake, awake, O impenitent sinners, who are as yet unprepared for the business and blessedness of the heavenly state; awake and exert your souls in warmest reflections on matters of infinite importance.

(1.) Think with yourselves how much the great God has done towards the preparation of sinful men for this heaven; think seriously of his long-suffering goodness, and his sparing mercy, which should have led you long ago to a melting sense of your own folly, and brought you back unto him by humble repentance. For what reason were his patience and his long-suffering exercised towards

you, if not for this very purpose? Rom. ii. 4. Think of the blessings of nature with which he has surrounded you, and the comforts of this life wherewith he has furnished you, in order to allure your thoughts towards him, who is the spring of all goodness; and to raise your desires towards him. It is he that invites you, who will be the everlasting portion and happiness of his people, and in whose favour consists life and felicity; and dare not any longer neglect your preparation for this happiness, which consists in the enjoyment of God, lest you should be cut off before you are prepared.

(2.) Consider again what Jesus the Son of God has done and suffered, and consider what he is yet doing towards the preparation of souls for heaven. He came down to our world to undertake the glorious and dreadful work of the redemption of sinners from the curse of the law and the terrors of hell, and to procure a heaven for every rebellious creature that would return to God his Father. Think of the agonies of his death with which he purchased mansions of glory for those that receive his grace in his own appointed methods, those that are willing to have their hearts and minds formed into a suitable frame to receive this felicity. Remember that he is risen from the dead, he is ascended to prepare a place in glory for those that are willing to follow him through the paths of holiness. Hearken to the many kind invitations and allurements of his gospel, which calls to the worst of sinners to return and live, and entreats and exhorts those who are in the ends of the earth, and upon the borders of hell, "to look unto him that they may be saved," Isa. xlv. 22. Take heed that you suffer not these seasons of his inviting love to slide away and vanish unimproved; take heed how you rebel against the language of the grace of his gospel, and thereby prepare yourselves for double and everlasting destruction.

(3.) Think again, what blessed assistances he has proposed to those who are desirous to be trained up for heaven; how many thousand souls, as carnal, as sensual, and as criminal as yours are, have been recovered by the word of his gospel, and the influences of his Spirit, to a new nature and life of holiness? How many are there who from children of wrath, have become the sons and daughters of the most high God, heirs of this blessedness, and pre-

pared for the enjoyment of it? O take heed that you resist not this grace, nor rebel against the kind and sacred motions of the blessed Spirit within you, when his very office and business is to change your sinful natures, and to prepare you for the regions of eternal holiness and peace.

(4.) Think yet further what advantages you have had from the weekly ministrations of the word of grace, from reading the book of God in your own language, and from the pious education many of you have enjoyed in the families from whence you sprung. Think what awakening hints you have received by the inward conviction of your own consciences, and by the christian friends you may have conversed with. Have you not been told plainly enough by the voice of conscience, that you are now utterly unprepared for heaven? Have not public and private admonitions given you sufficient warning of the danger of your present state? And after all this will you proceed in your own sinful course till you arrive at the very gates of hell and destruction, till you have prepared yourselves, and made your souls ripe for the vengeance of God, and are plunged into it by death without remedy or relief?

(5.) Consider how dreadful will your state be if death meet you in all your guilt and defilements, unwashed, unpardoned, and unsanctified, without any garment of righteousness, without any robe of salvation. What a terrible sentence is that which death will pronounce upon every such sinner the moment that he strikes their heart? Hear it and tremble, O miserable creature, hear the formidable and eternal sentence, "Let him that is unholy be unholy still:" let him that is unprepared for heaven go down to the regions of death and hell, for which his iniquities have best prepared him.

(6.) Think with yourselves, if you have any thing of importance to do in this world, or have any momentous scene of life to pass through, how diligent are you in preparation for it. If you are but to visit the court of a prince, or to go to make your addresses to any great man of honour and power, or to be admitted into any numerous society of a superior character, how diligently do you endeavour to furnish yourselves with such knowledge of the common ceremonies of life, and such ornaments about your body as may render you acceptable among those whom you are going to converse with. And does not an entrance into

the court of heaven, into the presence of a God of holiness, and into the society of pure and blessed spirits, require some solicitude and care about those ornaments and qualifications which are necessary for so solemn and glorious an appearance? If you are designing in this life to commence any trade or business for your employment and your support, you are willing to serve an apprenticeship of seven years in order to a preparation for the exercise of this public business; and can you not afford one day in a week to learn the business of heaven, and to prepare for the blessedness of it?

And let parents also consider with themselves what pains they have taken that their children may be fit for the trades and employments of life to which they design them, and then let each enquire of their own consciences, have I ever done so much to train up my son for the heavenly world, to fit him for the appearance before God, and saints and angels, and for all the unknown services of that celestial country?

(7.) Go on yet further, O impenitent sinners, and consider with yourselves what a blessedness it is to be prepared for heaven; for then you are prepared for death, and at once you take away all the terrors of it. O what an unspeakable happiness is it to pass through this world daily without the fear of dying! What is it that makes life so bitter to multitudes of souls, and every malady or accident so frightful to them, but the perpetual terrors of death? Think what a divine satisfaction it is to walk up and down in this desert land, ready prepared for an entrance into the land of promise, the inheritance of the saints in light. Think of the solid joy and inward consolation of those souls who feel in themselves an habitual readiness for a departure hence, and who are wrought up by divine grace to a preparation for the business and the joys above. Think of the victory over death, which is obtained by such a readiness for heaven, and how glorious a thing it is to meet that last enemy the king of terrors, and encounter him without fear, and to triumph over him with divine language, "O death, where is thy sting?" How joyful a scene would it be to take leave of all our friends in this land of mortality, with an assured hope that we are entering into a happier climate and a better country, ready prepared for all the more glorious scenes that shall meet us in the invisible world?

It is an amazing thing to me, how the children of men, who are dying daily off from this stage of life, who must all shortly die, and enter into a world of eternal futurity, should be no more concerned about a preparation for their departure hence: that they should be so stupidly thoughtless of a world to come, while they are on the very borders of it, and eternal joy or eternal sorrow depends upon this one question, 'Am I prepared for heaven or not?' O these two awful regions of the unseen world; where the love of God shines with its brightest glories, or where the vengeance of God is discovered in all its anguish and horror! One of these will be the certain and eternal dwelling place of the souls that are prepared for them, and there must they pass their long immortality, either in joy or in sorrow, without a change; and yet the foolish and besotted tribes of mankind seem to have abandoned all thought and concern about them. A dangerous lethargy, or distraction!

What shall we do to cure sinners of this madness? Shall I try to rouse these indolent unthinking wretches out of their dangerous and mortal slumbers with the loudest voice of thunder and divine terror? But the lethargy of sin is proof against all these terrors and thunders. Shall I call for a fountain of tears into my eyes, and weep over them with the tenderest sympathy and compassion? But they feel not any meltings of pity for themselves, nor are their hearts to be softened by all our tears and wailings. Shall I beseech them in the name of Christ by the bowels of his dying love, and the blood and anguish of his sufferings for our salvation? But even these divine and astonishing instances of tenderness and mercy make no impression on their souls. While Satan holds them in his chains, they are sleeping the sleep of death. O for a word of sovereign and almighty Grace to reach the centre of their spirits! to shake all the powers of their nature! to awaken them to behold their eternal interest, and to prepare for heavenly felicity. Awake, O sleepers, ere the angel of death seize you, and the grave shut its mouth upon you; then all your seasons and hopes of mercy are cut off for ever, and you will awake hopeless immortals.

I shall conclude this discourse with one word of exhortation to those who are in any measure wrought up to a preparation for the heavenly blessedness. O happy creature! whatsoever pains you have taken, whatever conflicts

you have endured in the matter of your own salvation, yet let God and his grace have all the honour of this work. It is to God you owe your sacrifices of praise. 'He that hath wrought you up for this felicity is God.' It was he who awakened you first, and set you a thinking of your most important concerns: it was he that led you first into the way of salvation by Jesus Christ his Son, and hath thus far crowned your labours and your prayers with success and blessing. Every stumblingblock in your way might have thrown you down to perdition: every temptation might have turned you back from this glorious pursuit: every enemy of your souls might have discouraged or overcome you, if God and his grace had not been engaged on your side.

It is he that hath upheld you when you were falling; he hath taken you by the hand and led you right onward when you were wandering, and he hath supported you by his divine cordials of promise when you were fainting. It is God who hath enabled you to maintain your conflict with all the mighty obstacles of your faith and hope; it is his grace that hath renewed your nature, hath weaned you from this vain flattering world, and given you a sacred relish of divine blessedness. It is he who hath formed you again after his own image, and hath trained you up, and made you meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Call up all your powers to praise his goodness, and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name: bless the Lord for ever, and forget not all his benefits." 'It is God who hath called me out of darkness into his marvellous light, and given me to see the things that belong to my everlasting peace. It is God, who washed away my iniquities in the blood of his own Son, and hath renewed me unto holiness by his blessed Spirit. It is God who hath taken me out of the family of sin and Satan, and given me a place among his children; who hath begun to prepare me for the joys and blessings of heaven, and in his own time he will fulfil all my hopes, and complete my felicity.' Walk before him with all holy care and watchfulness, and 'take heed that you lose not the things which you have wrought,' nor the things which God hath wrought in you, but that, persevering to the end, 'you may receive the full reward,' and obtain the crown of everlasting life. Amen.

DISCOURSE IX.

NO PAIN AMONG THE BLESSED.

Rev. xxi. 4. Neither shall there be any more pain.

There have been some divines in ancient times as well as in our present age, who suppose this prophecy relates to some glorious and happy event here on earth, wherein the saints and faithful followers of Christ shall be delivered from the bondage and miseries to which they have been exposed in all former ages, and shall enjoy the blessing which these words promise. Among these writers some have placed this happy state before the resurrection of the body; others make it to belong to that 'first resurrection' which is spoken of in Rev. xx. 6. But let this prophecy have a particular aspect upon what earthly period soever, yet all must grant it is certainly true concerning the 'heavenly state;' from whose felicities, taken in the *literal* sense, these figurative expressions are derived to foretel the happiness of any period of the church in this world; and in this sense, as 'part of our happiness in heaven,' I shall understand the words here, and propose them as the foundation for my present discourse.

Among the many things that make this life uncomfortable, and render mankind unhappy here below, this is one that has a large influence, viz. that 'in this mortal state we are all liable to pain,' from which we shall be perfectly delivered in the life to come. The Greek word which is here translated *pain*, signifies also *toil* and *fatigue* and excessive labour of the body, as well as *anguish* and *vexation* of the spirit. But since in the two other places of the New Testament where it is used, the word most properly signifies the 'pain of the body,' I presume to understand it chiefly in this sense also in my text.

I need not spend time in explaining 'what pain is' to persons who dwell in flesh and blood. There is not one of you in this assembly but is better acquainted with the

nature of it by the sense of *feeling*, than it is possible for the wisest philosopher to inform you by all his learned language. Yet that I may proceed regularly, I would just give you this short description of it. 'Pain is an uneasy perception of the soul, occasioned by some indisposition of the body to which it is united;' whether this arise from some disorder or malady in the flesh itself, or from some injury received from without by wounds, bruises, or any thing of the like kind. Now this sort of uneasy sensations is not to be found or feared in heaven.

In order to make our present meditations on this part of the 'blessedness of heaven' useful and joyful to us while we are here on earth, let us enquire,

I. What are the evils or grand inconveniences that generally flow from the pains we suffer here; and as we go we shall survey the satisfactions which arise by our freedom from them all in heaven.

II. What just and convincing proofs may be given that there are no such uneasy sensations to be felt in heaven, or to be feared after this life.

III. What are the chief reasons or designs of the blessed God in sending pain on his creatures in this world; and at the same time I shall shew that pain is banished from the heavenly state, because God has no such designs remaining to be accomplished in that world.

IV. What lessons we may learn from the painful discipline which we feel while we are here, in order to shew there is no need of such discipline to teach us those lessons in heaven. Let us address ourselves to make these four enquiries in their order.

§ I. *First.* 'What are the evils which flow from pain, and usually attend it in this life;' and all along as we go we shall take a short view of the heavenly state, where we shall be released from all these evils and inconveniencies.

1. 'Pain has a natural tendency to make the mind sorrowful as well as the body uneasy.' Our souls are so nearly united to flesh and blood, that it is not possible for the mind to possess perfect happiness and ease, while the body is exposed to so many occasions of pain. It is granted, that natural courage and strength of heart may prevail in some persons to bear up their spirits under long and intense pains of the flesh, yet they really take away so much

of the ease and pleasure of life, while any of us lie under the acute sensations of them. Pain will make us confess that we are flesh and blood, and force us sometimes to cry out and groan. Even a stoick in spite of all the pride of his philosophy, will sometimes be forced, by a sigh or a groan to confess himself a man. What are the greatest part of the groans and outcries that are heard all round this our globe of earth but the effects of pain, either felt or feared?

But in heaven, where there is no pain, there shall be no sighing or groaning, nor any more crying, as my text expresses. There shall be nothing to make the flesh or the spirit uneasy, and to break the eternal thread of peace and pleasure that runs through the whole duration of the saints: not one painful moment to interrupt the everlasting felicity of that state. When we have done with earth and mortality, we have done also with sickness and anguish of nature, and with all sorrow and vexation for ever. There are no groans in the heavenly world to break in upon the harmony of the harps and the songs of the blessed; no sighs, no outcries, no anguish there to disturb the music and the joy of the inhabitants. And though the soul shall be united to the body, new-raised from the dead, to dwell for ever in union, yet that new-raised body shall have neither any springs of pain in it, nor be capable of giving anguish or uneasiness to the indwelling spirit for ever.

2. Another evil which attends on pain is this, that 'it so indisposes our nature as often to unfit us for the businesses and duties of the present state.' With how much coldness and indifferency do we go about our daily work, and perform it too with many interruptions, when nature is burdened with continual pain, and the vital springs of action are overborne with perpetual uneasiness? What a listlessness do we find to many of the duties of religion at such a season, unless it be to run more frequently to the throne of God, and pour out our groanings and our complaints there? Groanings and cries are the language of nature, and the children of God address themselves in this language to their heavenly Father. Blessed be the name of our gracious God, who hears every secret sigh, who is acquainted with the sense of every groan, while we mourn before him, and make our complaints to him, that we can-

not worship him, nor work for him as we would do, because of the anguish and maladies of nature.

And what an indisposition and backwardness do we feel in ourselves to fulfil many of the duties towards our fellow creatures while we ourselves are under present smart and anguish? Pain will so sensibly affect *self* as to draw off all our thoughts thither, and centre them there, that we cannot so much employ our cares and our active powers for the benefit of our neighbours. It abates our concern for our friends, and while it awakens the spirit within us into keen sensations, it takes away the activity of the man that feels it from almost all the services of human life. When human nature bears so much it can act but little.

But what a blessed state will that be when we shall never feel this indisposition to duties, either human or divine, through any uneasiness of the body? When we shall never more be subject to any of these painful impediments, but for ever cast off all those clogs and burdens which fetter the active powers of the soul? Then we shall be joyfully employed in such unknown and glorious services to God our Father, and to the blessed Jesus, as require much superior capacities to what we here possess, and shall find no weakness, no weariness, no pain throughout all the years of our immortality, Rev. vii. 15. None of the blessed above are at rest or idle, either "day or night, but they serve him in his temple," and never cease, and iv. 8. No faintness, no languors are known there. The "inhabitants of that land shall not say, I am sick." Everlasting vigour, cheerfulness and ease shall render every blessed soul for ever zealous and active in obedience, as the angels are in heaven.

3. 'Pain unfits us for the enjoyments of life, as well as for the labours and duties of it.' It takes away all the pleasing satisfactions which might attend our circumstances, and renders the objects of them insipid and unrelishing. What pleasure can a rich man take in all the affluence of earthly blessings around him, while some painful distemper holds him upon the rack, and distresses him with the torture? How little delight can he find in meats or in drinks which are prepared for luxury when sharp pain calls all his attention to the diseased part? What joy can he find in magnificent buildings, in gay and shining

furniture, in elegant gardens, or in all the glittering treasures of the Indies, when the gout torments his hands and his feet, or the rheumatism afflicts his limbs with intense anguish? If pain attacks any part of the body and rises to a high degree, the luxuries of life grow tasteless, and life itself is embittered to us. Or when pains less acute are prolonged through weeks and months, and perhaps stick in our flesh all the night as well as in the day; how vain and feeble are all the efforts of the bright and gay things around us to raise the soul into cheerfulness? Therefore Solomon calls old age the "years wherein there is no pleasure," Eccles. xii. 1. Because so many aches and ails in that season pursue us in a continual succession; so many infirmities and painful hours attend us usually in that stage of life, even in the best situation that mortality can boast of, as cuts off and destroys all our pleasures.

But O what a wondrous, what a joyful change shall that be, when the soul is commanded to forsake this flesh and blood, when it rises as on the wings of angels to the heavenly world, and leaves every pain behind it, together with the body in the arms of death? And what a more illustrious and delightful change shall we meet in the great rising day, when our bodies shall start up out of the dust with vigorous immortality, and without any spring or seat of pain? All the unknown enjoyments with which heaven is furnished, shall be taken in by the enlarged powers of the soul with intense pleasure, and not a moment's pain shall ever interrupt them.

4. Another inconvenience and evil which belongs to pain is, that 'it makes time and life itself appear tedious and tiresome, and adds a new burden to all other grievances.' Many evidences of this truth are scattered throughout all nature, and on all sides of this globe. There is not one age of mankind but can furnish us with millions of instances. In what melancholy language does Job discover his sensations of the tiresome nature of pain? "I am made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down I say, when shall I rise and the night be gone? And I am full of tossing to and fro unto the dawning of the day," Job vii. 3, 4. When pain takes hold of our flesh, it seems to stretch the measures of time to a tedious length. We cry

out as Moses expresses it, Deut. xxviii. 67, "In the morning we say, would to God it were evening; and at the return of the evening we say again, would to God it were morning."

Long are those hours indeed, whether of day-light or darkness, wherein there is no relief or intermission of acute pain. How tiresome a thing is it to count the clock at midnight in long successions, and to wait every hour for the distant approach of morning, while our eyes are unable to close themselves in slumber, and our anguish admits not the common refuge of sleep. There are multitudes among the race of mortals who have known these truths by sore experience. Blessed be God that we do not always feel them.

But when we turn our thoughts to the heavenly world, where there is no pain, there we shall find no weary hours, no tedious days, though eternity with all its unmeasurable lengths of duration lies before us. What a dismal thought is eternal pain? The very mention of it makes nature shudder and stand aghast; but futurity with all its endless years, in a land of peace and pleasure gives the soul the most delightful prospect, for there is no shadow of uneasiness in that state to render our abode there tiresome, or to think the ages of it long.

5. Another evil that belongs to pain is, that 'it has an unhappy tendency to ruffle the passions, and to render us fretful and peevish within ourselves, as well as towards those who are round about us.' Even the kindest and tenderest hand that ministers to our relief, can hardly secure itself from the peevish quarrels of a man in extreme pain.

Not that we are to suppose that this peevish humour, this fretfulness of spirit are thereby made innocent and perfectly excused. No, by no means; but it must be acknowledged still, that continuance in pain is too ready to work up the spirit into frequent disquietude and eagerness. We are tempted to fret at every thing, we quarrel with every thing, we grow impatient under every delay, angry with our best friends, sharp and sudden in our resentments, with wrathful speeches breaking out of our lips.

This peevish humour in a day of pain is so common a fault, that I fear it is too much excused and indulged. Let me rather say with myself, 'My God is now putting

me to the trial what sort of Christian I am, and how much I have learnt of self-government, and through his grace I will subdue my uneasy passions, though I cannot relieve my pain.' O it is a noble point of honour gained in a sick chamber, or on a bed of anguish, to lie pressed with extreme pain, and yet maintain a serenity and calmness of soul; to be all meekness and gentleness and patience among our friends or attendants, under the sharp twinges of it; to utter no rude or angry language, and to take every thing kindly that they say or do, and "become like a weaned child." But such a character is not found in every house.

A holy soul, through the severity of pain, may sometimes in such an hour be too much ruffled by violent and sudden fits of impatience. This proceeded to such a degree even in that good man Job, under his various calamities and the sore boils upon his flesh, that it made him "curse the day wherein he was born," and cry out in the anguish of his spirit, "my soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life," Job iii. and vii. 15; and there have been several instances of those who, having not the fear of God before their eyes, with hasty violence and murderous hands have put an end to their own lives, through their wild and sinful impatience of constant pain.

But these trials are for ever finished when this life expires: then all our pains are ended for ever if we are found among the children of God. There is not, nor can be any temptation in heaven, to fretfulness or disquietude of mind. All the peevish passions are dropped into the grave, together with the body of flesh; and those evil humours which were the sources of smart and anguish here on earth have no place in the new-raised body. Those irregular juices of animal nature which tormented the nerves, and excited pain in the flesh, and which at the same time provoked choler and irritated the spirit, are never found in the heavenly mansions. There is nothing but peace and pleasure, joy and love, goodness and benevolence, ease and satisfaction diffused through all the regions on high. There are no inward springs of uneasiness to ruffle the mind, none of those fretful ferments which were wont to kindle in the mortal body, and explode themselves, with fire and thunder upon every supposed offence, or even sometimes without provocation. O happy state

and blessed mansions of the saints, when this body of sin shall be destroyed, and all the restless atoms that disquieted the flesh and provoked the spirit to impatience, shall be buried in the dust of death, and never, never rise again!

6. 'Pain carries a temptation with it, sometimes to repine and murmur at the providence of God.' Not fellow-creatures alone, but even our sovereign Creator comes within the reach of the peevish humours, which are alarmed and roused by sharp or continual pain. Jonah the prophet, when he felt the sultry heat of the sun smite fiercely upon him, and that the gourd which gave him a friendly shadow was withered away, told God himself in a passion, that "he did well to be angry, even unto death," Jonah iv. 9. And even the man of Uz, the pattern of patience, was sometimes transported with the smart and maladies that were upon him, so that he complained *against* God as well as complained *to* him, and used some very unbecoming expressions towards his Maker. When we are under the smarting rebukes of Providence, we are ready to compare ourselves with others who are in peace, and then the envious and the murmuring humour breaks out into rebellious language, "Why am I thus afflicted more than others? Why hast thou set me as a mark for thine arrows? Why dost thou not let loose thy hand and cut me off from the earth?"

But in heaven there is a glorious reverse of all such unhappy scenes. There is no pain nor any temptation to murmur at the dealings of the Almighty. There is nothing that can incline us to think hardly of God: the days of chastisement are for ever ended, and painful discipline shall be used no more. We shall live for ever in the embraces of the love of God, and he shall be the object of our everlasting praise. Perfect felicity without the interruption of one uneasy thought, for ever forbids the inhabitants of that world to repine at their situation under the eternal smiles of that blessed Being that made them.

7. To add no more, 'pain and anguish of the flesh have sometimes prevailed so far as to distract the mind as well as destroy the body.' It has overpowered all the reasoning faculties of man, it has destroyed natural life, and brought it down to the grave. The senses have been confounded, and the understanding overwhelmed with severe and

racking pain, especially where there hath been an impatient temper to contest with them. Extreme smart of the flesh distresses feeble nature, and turns the whole frame of it upside down in wild confusion: it has actually worn out this animal frame, and stopped all the springs of vital motion. The gout and the stone have brought death upon the patient in this manner; and a dreadful manner of dying it is, to have breath and life and nature quite oppressed and destroyed with intense and painful sensations.

But when we survey the mansions of the heavenly world, we shall find none of these evils there. No danger of any such events as these; for there is no pain, no sorrow, no crying, no death nor destruction there. The mind shall be for ever clear and serene in the ease and happiness of the separate state: and when the body shall be raised again, that glorified body, as was intimated a little before, shall have none of the seeds of distemper in it, no ferments that can rack the nerves, or create anguish; no fever, or gout, or stone, was ever known in that country, no headache or heart-ache have ascended thither.

That body also shall be capable of no outward wounds nor bruises, for it is raised only for happiness, and leaves all the causes of pain behind it. It is a body made for immortality and pleasure; there the sickly Christian is delivered from all the maladies of the flesh, and the twinges of acute pain which made him groan here on earth night and day. There the martyrs of the religion of Jesus, and all the holy confessors are free from their cruel tormentors, those surly executioners of heathen fury, or antichristian wrath: They are for ever released from racks, and wheels, and fires, and every engine of torture and smart. Immortal ease and unfading health and cheerfulness run through their eternal state, and all the powers of the man are composed for the most regular exercises of devotion and divine joy.

Thus I have endeavoured briefly to set the different states of heaven and earth before you under this distinguishing character, that 'all the tempting, the distressing and mischievous attendants and consequences of pain' to which we are exposed in our mortal life, are for ever banished from the heavenly world.

§ II. The 'second general enquiry' was this, 'What

just and convincing arguments or proofs can be given, that there are no pains or uneasy sensations to be felt by the saints in a future state, nor to be feared after this life?'

My answers to this question shall be very few; because I think the thing must be sufficiently evident to those who believe the New Testament, and have liberty to read it.

First argument. 'God has assured us so in his word, that there is no pain for holy souls to endure in the world to come:' My text may be esteemed a sufficient proof of it; for whatsoever particular event or period of the church on earth this prophecy may refer to, yet the description is borrowed from the blessedness of heaven; and if there shall be any such state on earth, much more will it be so in the heavenly world, whereof that period on earth is but a shadow and emblem. We are expressly told, Rev. xiv. 8, in order to encourage the persecuted saints and martyrs, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth, for they rest from their labours, (or pains) and their works follow them;" i. e. in a way of gracious recompence.

It is granted indeed by the Papists themselves, that in heaven there is no pain; yet they suppose there are many and grievous pains for the soul to undergo in a place called *purgatory*, after the death of the body, before it arrives at heaven.

But give me leave to ask, does not St. Paul express himself with confidence concerning himself and his fellow Christians—"that they shall be present with the Lord when they are absent from the body?" 2 Cor. v. 8. Surely the state wherein Christ our Lord dwells after all his sufferings and agonies, is a state of everlasting ease without suffering; and shall not his followers dwell with him? Do we not read in the parable of our Saviour, Luke xvi. 22, that Lazarus was no sooner dead, than "his soul was carried by angels into the bosom of Abraham," or paradise? Every holy soul wherein the work of grace is begun, and sin hath received its mortal wound, is perfectly sanctified when it is released from this body; and it puts off the body of sin and the body of flesh together, for "nothing that defileth must enter into" paradise or the heavenly state.

The word of God has appointed but two states, viz. *heaven* and *hell*, for the reception of all mankind when

they depart from this world : and how vain a thing must it be for men to invent a *third state*, and make a purgatory of it ? This is a building erected by the church of Rome between heaven and hell, and prepared by their wild imagination for souls of imperfect virtue, to be tormented there with pains equal to those of hell, but of shorter duration. This state of fiery purgation, and extreme anguish, is devised by that mother of lies, partly under a pretence of completing the penances and satisfactions for the sins of men committed in this life, and partly also to purify and refine their souls from all the remaining dregs of sin, and to fill up their virtues to perfection, that they may be fit for the immediate presence of God. But does not the Scripture sufficiently inform us, that the atonement or satisfaction of Christ for sin is full and complete in itself, and needs none of our additions in this world or another? Does not the Apostle John tell us, 1st epist. chap. i. ver. 7, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin?" Nor shall the saints after this life sin any more, to require any new atonement ; nor do they carry the seeds of sin to heaven with them, but drop them together with the flesh, and all the sources of pain together. Now since neither Christ nor his apostles give us any intimation of such a place as purgatory for the refinement or purification of souls after this life, we have no ground to hearken to such a fable.

The second argument is this ; 'God has not provided any medium to convey pain to holy souls after they have dropped this body of flesh.' They are pardoned, they are sanctified, they are accepted of God for ever ; and since they are in no danger of sinning afresh by the influences of corrupt flesh and blood, therefore they are in no fear of suffering any thing thereby. And if, as some divines have supposed, there should be any pure etherial bodies or vehicles provided for holy separate spirits, when departed from this grosser tabernacle of flesh and blood, yet it cannot be supposed that the God of all grace would mix up any seeds of pain with that etherial matter, which is to be the occasional habitation of sanctified spirits in that state, nor that he would make any avenues or doors of entrance for pain into these refined vehicles, when the state of their sinning and their trial is for ever finished.

Nor will the body at the final resurrection of the saints

be made for a medium of any painful sensations. All the pains of nature are ended, when the first union between flesh and spirit is dissolved. When this body lies down to sleep in the dust, it shall never awake again with any of the principles of sin or pain in it. Though "it be sown in weakness, it is raised in power; though it be sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory;" and we shall be made like the Son of God without sorrow and without sin for ever.

3d. Argument. 'There are no moral causes or reasons why there should be any thing of pain provided for the heavenly state.' And if there be no moral reasons for it, surely God will not provide pains for his creatures without reason! But this thought leads me to the next general head of my discourse.

§ III. The third general enquiry which I proposed to make was this, 'What may be the chief moral reasons, motives, or designs of the blessed God in sending pain on his creatures here below; and at the same time I shall shew that these designs and purposes of God are finished, and they have no place in heaven.'

1st. Then, 'pain is sometimes sent into our natures to awaken slothful and drowsy Christians out of their spiritual slumbers, or to rouse stupid sinners from a state of spiritual death.' Intense and sharp pain of the flesh has oftentimes been the appointed and effectual means of providence to attain these desirable ends.

Pain is like a rod in the hand of God, wherewith he smites sinners that are dead in their trespasses, and his Spirit joins with it to awaken them into spiritual life. This rod is sometimes so smarting and severe, that it will make a senseless and ungodly wretch look upwards to the hand that smites it, and take notice of the rebuke of heaven, though all the thundering and lightning of the word, and all the terrors of hell denounced there, could not awaken him.

Acute pain is also a common instrument in our heavenly Father's hand, to recover backsliding saints from their secure and drowsy frames of spirit. David often found it so, and speaks it plainly in the 38th and 39th Psalms; and in Psalm cxix. 67, he confesses, "before I was afflicted I went astray;" but when he had felt the scourge, he learnt to obey, and to 'keep the word of his God.'

But there is 'no need of this discipline in heaven:' no

need of this smarting scourge to make dead sinners feel their Maker's hand, in order to rouse them into life, for there are no such inhabitants in that world. Nor is there any need of such divine and paternal discipline of God in those holy mansions, where there is no drowsy Christian to be awakened, no wandering spirit that wants to be reduced to duty. And where the designs of such smarting strokes have no place, pain itself must be for ever banished; for 'God does not willingly afflict, nor take delight in grieving the children of men,' without substantial reasons for it.

2. Another use of bodily pain and anguish in this world is, 'to punish men for their faults and follies, to make them know what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God, and thereby to guard them against new temptations.' Jer. ii. 19, "Thy own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee;" i. e. by means of the smarting chastisements they bring upon men. When God makes the sinner taste of the fruit of his own ways, he makes others also observe how hateful a thing every sin is in the sight of God, which he thinks fit so terribly to punish.

This is one general reason why special diseases, maladies, and plagues are spread over a whole nation, viz. to punish the sins of the inhabitants, when they have provoked God by public and spreading iniquities. War and famine with all their terrible train of anguish and agony, and the dying pains which they diffuse over a kingdom, are rods of punishment in the hand of God, the Governor of the world, to declare from heaven and earth his indignation against an ungodly and an unrighteous age.

This indeed is one design of the pains and torments of hell, where God inflicts pain without intermission; and this is sometimes the purpose of God in his painful providences here on earth. Shall I rise yet higher and say, that this was one great design in the eye of God, "when it pleased the Father to bruise" his best beloved Son, and put him under the impressions of extreme pain, viz. to discover to the world the abominable evil that was in sin? While Jesus stood in the stead of sinners, then "his soul was exceeding sorrowful even to death, and he sweat drops of blood" under the pressure of his agonies, to let the world see what the sin of man had deserved. And sometimes

God smites his own children in this world with smarting strokes of correction, when they have indulged any iniquity, to shew the world that God hates sin in his own people wheresoever he finds it, and to bring his children back again to the paths of righteousness.

But 'in the heavenly state, there are no faults to punish, no 'follies to chastise.' Jesus, our Surety in the days of his flesh, has suffered those sorrows which made atonement for sin, and that anguish of his holy soul, and the blood of his cross, have satisfied the demands of God; so that with honour he can pardon ten thousand penitent criminals, and provide an inheritance of ease and blessedness for them for ever. When once we are dismissed from this body, the spirit is thoroughly sanctified, and there is no fire of purgatory needful to burn out the remains of sin. Those foolish invented flames are but false fire, kindled by the priests of Rome to fright the souls of the dying, and to squeeze money out of them to purchase so many vain and idle masses to relieve the souls of the dead. Upon our actual release from this flesh and blood, neither the guilt nor the power of sin shall attend the saints in their flight to heaven: all the spirits that arrive there are made perfect in holiness without new scourges, and commence a state of felicity that shall never be interrupted.

3. God has appointed pain in this world, 'to exercise and try the virtues and the graces of his people.' As gold is thrown into the fire to prove and try how pure it is from any coarse alloy, so the children of God are sometimes left for a season in the furnace of sufferings, partly to refine them from their dross, and partly to discover their purity and their substantial weight and worth.

Sometimes 'God lays smarting pain with his own hand' on the flesh of his people, on purpose to try their graces. When we endure the pain without murmuring at Providence, then it is we come off conquerors. Christian submission and silence under the hand of God, is one way to victory. "I was dumb," says David, "and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it," Psal. xxxix. Our love to God, our resignation to his will, our holy fortitude and our patience find a proper trial in such smarting seasons. Perhaps when some severe pain first seizes and surprises us, we find ourselves 'like a wild bull in a net,' and all the powers of nature are thrown into tumult and disquiet-

ude, so that we have no possession of our own spirits; but when the hand of God has continued us awhile under this divine discipline, we learn to bow down to his sovereignty, we lie at his footstool calm and composed: he brings our haughty and reluctant spirits down to his foot, and makes us lie humble in the dust, and we wait with patience the hour of his release. Rom. v. 3, 4, 'Tribulation worketh patience, and patience' under tribulation 'gives us experience' of the dealings of God with his people, and makes our way to a confirmed *hope* in his love. The evidence of our various graces grows brighter and stronger under a smarting rod, till we are settled in a joyful confidence, and the soul rests in God himself.

Sometimes he has 'permitted evil angels to put the flesh to pain,' for the trial of his children; so "Job was smitten with sore boils from head to foot" by the malice of Satan, at the permission of God; but "he knows the way that I take," says this holy man, "and when he has tried me I shall come forth as gold; for my foot hath held his steps" through all these trials, "neither have I gone back from the commandments of his lips," Job. xxii. 10, 12.

At other times 'he suffers wicked men to spend their own malice, and to inflict dreadful pains on his own children.' Look back to the years of ancient persecution in the land of Israel, under Jewish or heathen tyrants; review the annals of Great Britain; look over the seas into popish kingdoms; take a view of the cursed courts of inquisition in Spain, Portugal, and Italy; behold the weapons, the scourges, the racks, the machines of torture and engines of cruelty, devised by the barbarous and inhuman wit of men, to constrain the saints to renounce their faith, and dishonor their Saviour. See the slow fires where the martyrs have been roasted to death with lingering torment. These are seasons of terrible trial indeed, whereby the malice of Satan and Antichrist would force the servants of God, and the followers of the Lamb, into sinful compliances with their idolatry, or a desertion of their post of duty. But the spirit of God has supported his children to bear a glorious testimony to pure and undefiled religion; and they have seemed to mock the rage of their tormentors, to defy all the stings of pain, and triumphed over their vain attempts to compel them to sin against their God.

One would sometimes be ready to wonder, that a God of infinite mercy and compassion should suffer his own dear children to be tried in so terrible a manner as this; but unsearchable wisdom is with him, and he does not give an account to men of all the reasons and the rules of his conduct. This has been his method of providence with his saints at especial seasons, under the Jewish and the Christian dispensations, and perhaps under all the dispensations of God to men, from the days of Cain and Abel to the present hour. Our blessed Lord has given us many warnings of it in his word by his own mouth, and by all his three Apostles, Paul, Peter and John. "They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Think it not strange therefore concerning the fiery trial. The devil, by his wicked agents, shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days, but fear none of the things which thou shalt suffer. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

But blessed be God that this world is the only stage of such trials. As soon as the state of probation is finished, the state of recompence begins. Such hard and painful exercises to try the virtues of the saints, have no place in that world, which was not made for a stage of trial and conflict, but a palace of glorious reward. 'Heaven is a place where crowns and prizes are distributed' to all those *blessed* ones 'who have endured temptation,' and who have been found faithful to the death. These sharp and dreadful combats with pain, have no place among conquerors, who have finished their warfare, and have begun their triumph.

4. 'Pain is sent us by the hand of Providence to teach us many a lesson both of truth and duty, which perhaps we should never have learnt so well without it.' This sharp sensation awakens our best powers to attend to those truths and duties which we took less notice of before. In the time of perfect ease we are ready to let them lie neglected or forgotten, till God our great Master takes his rod in hand for our instruction.

§ IV. And this leads me to the 'fourth general head' of my discourse, and that is to 'enquire what are those spiritual lessons which may be learnt on earth from the pains we have suffered, or may suffer in the flesh.' I shall

divide them into two sorts, viz. 'Lessons of instruction' in useful truth, and 'lessons of duty,' or practical Christianity; and there are many of each kind with which the disciples of 'Christ in this world' may be better acquainted, by the actual sensations of pain, than any other way: 'in this world' I say, and 'in this only;' for *in heaven* most of these 'lessons of doctrine and practice' are utterly needless to be taught, either because they have been so perfectly well known to all its inhabitants before, and their present situation makes it impossible to forget them; or they shall be let into the fuller knowledge of them in heaven in a far superior way of instruction, and without any such uneasy discipline. And this I shall evidently make appear, when I have first enumerated all these 'general lessons' both 'of truth and duty,' and shewn how wisely the great God has appointed them to be taught here on earth, under the scourge and the wholesome discipline of pain in the flesh.

I. 'The lessons of instruction here on earth, or the useful truths,' are such as these:

1. Pain teaches us feelingly, 'what feeble creatures we are, and how entirely dependent on God our Maker for every hour and moment of ease.' We are naturally wild and wanton creatures, and espeeially in the season of youth, our gayer powers are gadding abroad at the call of temptation; but when God sends his arrows into our flesh, he arrests us on a sudden, teaches us that we are but men, poor feeble dying creatures, soon crushed, and sinking under his hand. We are ready to exult in the vigour of youth, when animal nature, in its prime of strength and glory, raises our pride, and supports us in a sort of self-sufficiency; we are so vain and foolish, as to imagine nothing can hurt us. But when the pain of a little nerve seizes us, and we feel the acute twinges of it, we are made to confess that 'our flesh is not iron, nor our bones brass;' that we are by no means the lords of ourselves, or sovereigns over our own nature. We cannot remove the least degree of pain, till the Lord who sent it takes off his hand, and commands the smart to cease. If the torture fix itself but in a finger or a toe, or in the little nerve of a tooth, what intense agonies may it create in us, and that beyond all the relief of medicines, till the moment wherein God shall give us ease. This lesson of the frailty of hu-

man nature must be some time written upon our hearts in deep and smarting characters, by intense pain, before we have learnt it well; and this gives us, for some time to come, a happy guard against our pride and vanity. When David felt the stroke of the hand of God upon him, which corrected him with sharp rebukes for his iniquity, he makes an humble address to God, and acknowledges that his "beauty, and all the boasted excellencies of flesh and blood, consume away like a moth; surely every man is vanity!" Psal. xxxix. 10, 11.

2. The next useful truth in which pain instructs us, is 'the great evil that is contained in the nature of sin, because it is the occasion of such intense pain and misery to human nature.' I grant, I have hinted this before, but I would have it more powerfully impressed upon our spirits, and therefore I introduce it here again in this part of my discourse as a *spiritual lesson*, which we learn under the discipline of our heavenly Father.

It is true indeed that innocent nature was made capable of pain in the first Adam, and the innocent nature of the man Jesus Christ suffered acute pain, when he came in the likeness of sinful flesh. But if Adam had continued in his state of innocence, it is a great question with me, whether he or his children would have actually tasted or felt what acute pain is; I mean such pain as we now suffer, such as makes us so far unhappy, and such as we cannot immediately relieve.

It may be granted, that natural hunger, and thirst, and weariness after labour, would have carried in them some degrees of pain or uneasiness, even in the state of innocence; but these are necessary to awaken nature to seek food and rest, and to put the man in mind to supply his natural wants; and man might have immediately relieved them himself, for the supplies of ease were at hand; and these sort of uneasinesses were abundantly compensated by the pleasure of rest and food, and perhaps they were in some measure necessary to make food and rest pleasant.

But surely if sin had never been known in our world, all the pain that arises from inward diseases of nature, or from outward violence, had been a stranger to the human race, an unknown evil among the sons of men, as it is among the holy angels, the sons of God. There had been no distempers or acute pains to meet young babes at their

entrance into this world ; no maladies to attend the sons and daughters of Adam through the journey of life ; and they should have been translated to some higher and happier region, without death, and without pain.

It was the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, that acquainted Adam and his offspring with the evil of pain. Or if pain could have attacked innocence in any form or degree, it would have been but in a way of trial, to exercise and illustrate his virtues; and if he had endured the test, and continued innocent, I am satisfied he should never have felt any pain which was not overbalanced with superior pleasure, or abundantly recompensed by succeeding rewards and satisfactions.

Some persons indeed, have supposed it within the reach of the sovereignty of God to afflict and torment a sinless creature. Yet I think it is hardly consistent with his goodness, or his equity, to constrain an innocent being, which has no sin, to suffer pain without his own consent, and without giving that creature equal or superior pleasure as a recompence. Both those were the case in the sufferings of our blessed Lord in his human nature, who was perfectly innocent : it was with his own consent that he gave himself up to be a sacrifice, when "it pleased the Father to bruise him and put him to grief." And God rewarded him with transcendent honours and joys after his passion, he exalted him to his own right hand and his throne, and gave him authority over all things.

In general therefore we have sufficient reason to say, that as sin brought in death into human nature, so it was sin that brought in pain also ; and wheresoever there is any pain suffered among the sons and daughters of men, I am sure we may venture to assert boldly, that the sufferer may learn the evil of sin. Even the Son of God himself, when he suffered pain in his body, as well as anguish in his spirit, has told us by his Apostles, that our sins were the causes of it ; 'he bore our sins on his own body on the tree, and for our iniquities he was bruised :' so says Isaiah the prophet, and so speaks Peter the Apostle.

And sometimes the Providence of God is pleased to point out to us the particular sin we are guilty of by the special punishment which he inflicts. In Psal. cvii. 17, 18, "Fools are said to be afflicted," i. e. with pain and sickness,

"because of their transgressions" of riot and intemperance; "their soul abhors all manner of meat, and they draw near to the gates of death." Sickness and pain over-balance all the pleasures of luxury in meats and drinks, and make the epicure pay dear for the elegance of his palate, and the sweet relish of his morsels or his cups. The drunkard in his debauches, is preparing some smarting pain for his own punishment. And let us all be so wise as to learn this lesson by the pains we feel, that sin which introduced them into the world is an abominable thing in the sight of God, because it provokes him to use such smarting strokes of discipline in order to recover us from our folly, and to reduce us back again to the paths of righteousness.

O blessed smart! O happy pain, that helps to soften the heart of a sinner, and melts it to receive divine instruction, which before was hard as iron, and attended to no divine counsel! We are ready to wander from God, and forget him among the months and the years of ease and pleasure; but when the soul is melted in this furnace of painful sufferings, it more easily receives some divine stamp, some lasting impression of truth, which the words of the preacher and the book of God had before inculcated without success, and repeated almost in vain. Happy is the soul that learns this lesson thoroughly, and gains a more lasting acquaintance with the evil of sin, and abhorrence of it, under the smarting stroke of the hand of God. "Blessed is the man whom thou correctest, O Lord, and teachest him the truths that are written in thy law," Psal. xciv. 12.

3. Pain in the flesh teaches us also 'how dreadfully the great God can punish sin and sinners when he pleases, in this world or in the other.' It is written in the song of Moses, the man of God, Psal. xc. 11, "According to thy fear, so is thy wrath," i. e. the displeasure and anger of the blessed God is as terrible as we can fear it to be; and he can inflict on us such intense pains and agonies, whose distressing smart we may learn by feeling a little of them. Unknown multiplications of racking pain, lengthened out beyond years and ages, is part of the description of hellish torments, and the other part lies in the bitter twinges of conscience and keen remorse of soul for our past iniquities, but without all hope. Behold a man under a sharp fit of the gout or stone, which wrings the groans from his heart, and tears from his eye-lids; this is the hand of God

in the present world, where there are many mixtures of divine goodness; but if ever we should be so wilfully unhappy as to be plunged into those regions where the almighty vengeance of God reigns, without one beam of divine light or love, this must be dreadful indeed. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. x. 31, to be banished far off from all that is holy and happy, and to be confined to that dark dungeon, that place of torture, "where the gnawing worm *of conscience* never dies," and "where the fire *of divine anger* is never quenched."

We who are made up of flesh and blood, which is interwoven with many nerves and muscles, and membranes, may learn a little of the terrors of the Lord, if we reflect that every nerve, muscle, and membrane of the body is capable of giving us most sharp and painful sensations. We may be wounded in every sensible part of nature; smart and anguish may enter in at every pore, and make almost every atom of our constitution an instrument of our anguish. "Fearfully and wonderfully are we formed" indeed, capable of pain all over us; and if a God shall see fit to punish sin to its full desert, and penetrate every atom of our nature with pain, what surprising and intolerable misery must that be? And if God should raise the wicked out of their graves to dwell in such sort of bodies again, on purpose to shew his just anger against sin in their punishment, how dreadful, beyond expression, must their anguish be through the long ages of eternity? God can form even such bodies for immortality, and can sustain them to endure everlasting agonies.

Let us think again, that when the hand of our Creator sends pain into our flesh, we cannot avoid it, we cannot fly from it, we carry it with us wheresoever we go. His arrows stick fast in us, and we cannot shake them off; oftentimes it appears that we can find no relief from creatures: and if by the destruction of ourselves, i. e. of these bodies, we plunge ourselves into the world of spirits at once, we shall find the same God of holiness and vengeance there, who can pierce our souls with unknown sorrows, equal, if not superior, to all that we felt in the flesh. "If I make my bed in the grave, Lord, thou art there," thy hand of justice and punishment would find me out.

What a formidable thing it is to such creatures as we are,

to have God, our Maker, for our enemy? That God who has all the tribes of pain and disease, and the innumerable host of maladies at his command? He fills the air in which we breathe with fevers and pestilences as often as he wills. The gout and the stone arrest and seize us by his order, and stretch us upon a bed of pain. Rheumatisms and cholics come and go wheresoever he sends them, and execute his anger against criminals. He keeps in his hand all the various springs of pain, and every invisible rack that can torment the head or members, the bowels or the joints of man: he sets them at their dreadful work when and where he pleases. Let the sinner tremble at the name of his power and terror, who can fill both flesh and spirit with thrilling agonies; and yet he never punishes beyond what our iniquities deserve. How necessary is it for such sinful and guilty beings as we are, whose natures are capable of such constant and acute sensations of pain, to have the God of nature our friend and our reconciled God?

4. When we feel the acute pains of nature, we 'may learn something of the exceeding greatness of the love of Christ, even the Son of God,' that glorious Spirit, who took upon him flesh and blood for our sakes, that he might be capable of pain and death, though he had never sinned. He endured intense anguish, to make atonement for our crimes.* "Because the children" whom he came to save from misery "were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same," that he might suffer in the flesh, and by his sufferings put away our sins.

Happy was he in his Father's bosom, and the delight of his soul through many long ages before his incarnation. But he condescended to be born "in the likeness of sinful flesh," that he might feel such smart and sorrows as our sins had exposed us to. His innocent and holy soul was uncapable of such sort of sufferings till he put on this clothing of human nature, and became a Surety for sinful perishing creatures.†

* This language is loose and inaccurate. It seems to intimate that the *Divine Nature* of the Mediator suffered; which was impossible. The Son assumed not merely "flesh and blood," he assumed a perfect human nature; a body and a soul, which were susceptible of pain.—Ed.

† His "innocent and holy soul" did not exist before "he put on this clothing of human nature," as it was a constituent part of that nature. It could be "capable" of nothing before it received a being. The language, if not intended to convey a very erroneous idea, is very unguarded.—Ed.

Let us survey his sufferings a little. He was born to sorrow, and trained up through the common uneasy circumstances of the infant and childish state, till he grew up to man. What pains did attend him in hunger and thirst, and weariness, while he travelled on foot from city to city, through wilds and deserts, where there was no food nor rest? The Son of man sometimes wanted the common bread of nature, nor had he where to lay his head. What uneasy sensations was he exposed to, when he was buffeted, when he was smitten on the cheek, when his tender flesh was scourged with whips, and his temples were crowned with thorns, when his hands and his feet were barbarously torn with rude nails, and fastened to the cross, where the whole weight of his body hung on those wounds? And what man or angel can tell the inward anguish, when "his soul was exceeding sorrowful unto death," and the conflicts and agonies of his spirit forced out the drops of bloody sweat through every pore. It was by the extreme torture of his nature that he was supposed to expire on the cross; these were the pangs of his atonement and agonies that expiated the sins of men.

O blessed Jesus! what manner of sufferings were these? and what manner of love was it that willingly gave up thy sacred nature to sustain them? and what was the design of them, but to deliver us from the wrath of God in hell, to save our flesh and spirit from eternal anguish and distress there? Why was he "made such a curse for us," but "that he might redeem us from the curse of the law," and the just punishment of our own iniquities.

Let us carry our thoughts of his love, and our benefit by it, yet one step further. Was it not by these sorrows, and this painful passion, that he provided for us this very heaven of happiness, where we shall be for ever freed from all pain? Were they not all endured by him to procure a paradise of pleasure, a mansion of everlasting peace and joy for guilty creatures, who had merited everlasting pain? Was it not by these his agonies in the mortal body, which he assumed, that he purchased for each of us a glorified body, strong and immortal as his own when he rose from the dead, a body which has no seeds of disease or pain in it, no springs of mortality or death? May glory, honour and praise, with supreme pleasure, ever attend the sacred person of our Redeemer, whose sorrows and

anguish of flesh and spirit were equal to our misery, and to his own compassion.

5. Another lesson, which we are taught by the long and tiresome pains of nature, 'is the value and worth of the word of God, and the sweetness of a promise, which can give the kindest relief to a painful hour, and sooth the anguish of nature.' They teach us the excellency of the covenant of grace, which has sometimes strengthened the feeblest pieces of human nature to bear intense sufferings in the body, and which sanctifies them all to our advantage. Painful and tiresome maladies teach us to improve the promises to valuable purposes, and the promises take away half the smart of our pains by the sensations of divine love let into the soul.

We read of philosophers and heroes in some ancient histories, who could endure pain by dint of reasoning, by a pride of their science, by an obstinacy of heart, or by natural courage; but a Christian takes the word of a promise, and lies down upon it in the midst of intense pains of nature; and the pleasure of devotion supplies him with such ease, that all the reasonings of philosophy, all the courage of nature, all the anodynes of medicine, and soothing plaisters have attempted without success. When a child of God can read his Father's love in a promise, and by searching into the qualifications of his own soul, can lay faster hold of it by a living faith, the rage of his pain is much allayed, and made half easy. A promise is a sweet couch to rest a languishing body in the midst of pains, and a soft repose for the head or heart-ache.

The Stoicks pretended to give ease to pain, by persuading themselves 'there was no evil in it;' as though the mere misnaming of things would destroy their nature: but the Christian, by a sweet submission to the evil which his heavenly Father inflicts upon his flesh, reposes himself at the foot of God on the covenant of grace, and bears the wounds and the smart with much more serenity and honour. 'It is my heavenly Father that scourges me, and I know he designs me no hurt, though he fills my flesh with present pain: his own presence, and the sense of his love, soften the anguish of all that I feel: he bids me not yield to fear, for when I *pass through the fires he will be with me;* and he that loved me, and died for me, has suffered greater sorrows and more anguish on my account, than what he

calls me to bear under the strokes of his wise and holy discipline: he has left his word with me as an universal medicine to relieve me under all my anguish, till he shall bring me to those mansions on high, where sorrows and pains are found no more.'

6. Anguish and pain of nature here on earth teach us 'the excellency and use of the mercy-seat in heaven, and the admirable privilege of prayer.' Even the sons of mere nature are ready to think of God at such a season; and they who never prayed before, 'pour out a prayer before him when his chastening is upon them,' Isa. xxvi. 16. An hour of twinging and tormenting pain, when creatures and medicines can give no relief, drives them to the throne of God to try whether he will relieve them or not. But much more delightful is it for a child of God that has been used to address the throne of grace, to run thither with pleasure and hope, and to spread all his anguish before the face of his heavenly Father. The blessed God has built this mercy-seat for his people to bring all their sorrows thither, and spread them before his eyes in all their smarting circumstances, and he has been often pleased to speak a word of relief.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, when he dwelt in flesh and blood, practised this part of religion with holy satisfaction and success. "Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly," and an angel was sent to strengthen and comfort him, Luke xxii. 43, 44.

This was the relief of holy David in ancient times, Psalm xxv. 18, "Look upon my affliction and my pain, and pardon all my sins." Psal. cxvi. 3, 4, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell, or the grave, took hold of me; then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." And when he found a gracious answer to his request, he acknowledges the grace of God therein, and charges his soul to dwell near to God; "return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee; I was brought low, and he helped me, he delivered my soul from death, and mine eyes from tears."

But we have stronger encouragement than David was acquainted with, since it is revealed to us, that we "have an high Priest" at this throne ready to bespeak all necessary relief for us there, Heb. ii. 18. "An high Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," who has sustained the same sorrows and pains in the flesh,

who can pity and relieve his people under their maladies and acutest anguish, Heb. iv. 15. When we groan and sigh under continued pains, they are ready to make nature weary and faint: we groan unto the Lord, who knows the language of our frailty; our High Priest carries every groan to the mercy-seat; his compassion works towards his brethren, and he will suffer them to continue no longer under this discipline than is necessary for their own best improvement and happiness.

O how much of this sort of consolation has many a Christian learnt and tasted, by a holy intercourse with heaven, in such painful seasons? How much has he learnt of the tender mercies of God the Father, and of the pity and sympathy of our great High Priest above? Who would be content to live in such a painful world as this is, without the pleasure and relief of prayer? Who would live without an interest at this mercy-seat, and without the supporting friendship of this Advocate at the throne?

Thus I have run over the chief lessons of instruction or doctrine, which may be derived from our sensations of pain here in this world: but there is no need of this sort of discipline in the blessed regions of heaven to teach the inhabitants such truths.

They will remember 'what feeble helpless creatures they were' when they dwelt in flesh and blood; but they have put off those fleshly garments of mortality, with all its weaknesses together. The spirits of the blessed know nothing of those frailties, nor shall the bodies of the saints, new raised from the dust, bring back any of their old infirmities with them. These blessed creatures know well 'how entirely dependent they are for all things upon God' their Creator, without the need of pains and maladies to teach them, for they live every moment with God, and in a full dependence upon him: they are supported in their life, and all its everlasting blessings, by his immediate presence, power and mercy.

They have no need of pain in those fields or gardens of pleasure to teach them *the evil of sin;* they well remember all the sorrows they have passed through in their mortal state, while they were traversing the wilderness of this world, and they know that sin was the cause of them all. They *see the evil of sin* in the glass of the divine

holiness, and the hateful contrariety that is in it to the nature of God is discovered in the immediate light of all his perfections, his wisdom, his truth and his goodness. They behold the *evil of sin* in the marks of the sufferings of their blessed Saviour; he appears in glory 'as the Lamb that was slain,' and carries some memorials of his death about him, to let the saints know for ever what he has suffered to make atonement for their sins.

Nor have the blessed above any need to learn 'how dreadfully God can punish sin and sinners,' while they behold his indignation going forth in a long and endless stream, to make the wicked enemies of God in hell for ever justly miserable. And in this sense it may be said, that "the smoke of their torments comes up before God and his holy angels, and his saints for ever."

Nor do these happy beings stand in need of new sensations of pain, to teach them 'the exceeding greatness of the love of Christ,' who exposed himself to intense and smarting anguish, both of flesh and spirit, to procure their salvation. For while they dwell amidst the blessedness of that state, which the Redeemer purchased with the price of his own sufferings, they can never forget his love.

Nor do they want to learn in heaven the 'value of the word of God and his promises,' by which they were supported under their pains and sorrows in this mortal state. Those promises have been fulfilled to them partly on earth, and in a more glorious and abundant manner in the heavenly world. They relish the sweetness of all those words of mercy, in reviewing the means whereby divine grace sustained them in their former state of trial, and in the complete accomplishment of the best of those promises in their present situation amidst ten thousand endless blessings.

And if any of them were too cold and remiss, and infrequent in their applications to the mercy-seat by prayer, when they were here on earth, and stood in need of chastisement to make them pour out their prayers to God, yet they can never forget 'the value of this privilege,' while they themselves dwell round about the throne, and behold all their ancient sincere addresses to the mercy-seat answered and swallowed up in the full fruition of their present glories and joys. Praise is properly the language of heaven, when all their wants are supplied, and their pray-

ers on earth are finished; and whatever further desires they may have to present before God, the throne of grace is ever at hand, and God himself is ever in the midst of them to bestow every proper blessing in its season that belongs to the heavenly world. Not one of them can any more stand in need of chastisement or painful exercises of the flesh to drive them to the throne of God, while they are at home in their Father's house, and for ever near him and his all-sufficiency. It is from thence they are constantly deriving immortal supplies of blessedness, as from a spring that will never fail.

§ V. I proceed now to consider in the last place, what are the 'practical lessons which pain may teach us while we are here on earth' in our state of probation and discipline, and shall afterwards make it evident, that there is 'no need of pain in heaven for the same purposes.'

1. The frequent returns of pain may put us in mind 'to offer to God his due sacrifices of praise for the months and years of ease which we have enjoyed;' we are too ready to forget the mercy of God herein, unless we are awakened by new painful sensations; and when we experience new relief, then our lips are opened with thankfulness, and our mouth shews forth his praise. Then we cry out with devout language, 'Blessed be the Lord that has delivered us!' When we have been oppressed for some time with extreme anguish, then one day, or one hour of ease fills the heart and the tongue with thankfulness; 'blessed be the God of nature that has appointed medicines to restore our ease, and blessed be that goodness that has given success to them!' What a rich mercy is it under our acute torments, that there are methods of relief and healing found among the powers of nature, among the plants and the herbs, and the mineral stores which are under ground? Blessed be the Lord, who in the course of his providence has given skill to physicians to compose and to apply the proper means of relief! Blessed be that hand that has planted every herb in the field or the garden, and has made the bowels of the earth to teem with medicines for the recovery of our health and ease, and blessed be his name who has rebuked our maladies, who has constrained the smarting diseases to depart by the use of balms and balsams that are happily applied!

While we enjoy the benefits of common life, in health

of body and in easy circumstances, we are too often thoughtless of the hand of God, which showers down these favours of heaven upon us in a long and constant succession; but when he sees fit to touch us with his finger, and awaken some lurking malady within us, our ease vanishes, our days are restless and painful, and tiresome nights of darkness pass over us without sleep or repose. Then we repent that we have so long forgotten the God of our mercies; and we learn to lift up our praises to the Lord, that every night of our lives has not been restless, that every day and hour has not been a season of racking pain. Blessed be the Lord that enables us, without anguish or uneasiness, to fulfil the common business of the day; and blessed be his hand that draws the peaceful curtains of the night round about us! And even in the midst of moderate pains, we bless his name who gives us refreshing slumbers; and we grow more careful to employ and improve every moment of returning ease, as the most proper way of expressing our thankfulness to our Almighty healer.

Alas, what poor, sorry, sinful creatures are we in the present state, who want to be taught the value of our mercies by the removal of them! The man of a robust and vigorous make, and a healthy constitution, knows not the true worth of health and ease, nor sets a due value upon these blessings of heaven; but we are taught to thank God feelingly, for an easy hour after long repeated twinges of pain. We bless that goodness which gives us an easy night after a day of distressing anguish. Blessed be the God of nature and grace, that has not made the gout or the stone immortal, nor subjected our sensible powers to an everlasting cholic or tooth-ache.

2. Pain in the flesh more effectually teaches us 'to sympathise with those who suffer.' We learn a tenderness of soul experimentally by our own sufferings. We generally love *self* so well, that we forget our neighbours under special tribulation and distress, unless we are made to feel them too. In a particular manner, when our nature is pinched and pierced through with some smarting malady, we learn to pity those who lie groaning under the same disease. A kindredship of sorrows and sufferings works up our natures into compassion; and we find our own hearts more sensibly affected with the groans of our friends

under a sharp fit of the gout or rheumatism, when we ourselves have felt the stings of the same distemper.

Our blessed Saviour himself, though he wanted not compassion and love to the children of men, since he came down from heaven on purpose to die for them; yet he is represented to us as our merciful High Priest, who had learnt sympathy and compassion to our sorrows in the same way of experience as we learn it. He was "encompassed about with infirmities," when he took the sinless frailties of our nature upon him, that he might learn to pity us under those frailties. "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are," though he was always "without sin; and by the things which he suffered," he may be said, after the manner of men, to learn 'sympathy and pity' to miserable creatures, as well *as obedience* to God, who is blessed for ever, Heb. ii. 18, and iv. 15, and v. 2, 8.

3. Since our natures are subject to pain, it should teach us 'watchfulness against every sin, lest we double our own distresses by the mixture of guilt with them.' How careful should we be to keep always a clear conscience, that we may be able at all times to look up with pleasure to the hand of God who smites us, and be better composed to endure the pains which he inflicts upon us for our trial and improvement in grace. Innocence and piety, and a peaceful conscience, are an admirable defence to support the spirit against the overwhelming efforts of bodily pain: but when inward reproaches of mind, and a racking conscience join with acute pain in the flesh, it is double misery, and aggravated wretchedness. The scourges and inward remorse of our own hearts, joined to the sorrows of nature, add torment to torment. How dreadful is it when we are forced to confess, 'I have procured all this to myself by intemperance, by my rashness, by my obstinacy against the advice of friends,' and rebellion against the commands of God!

Probably it was such circumstances as these, that gave the soul of David double anguish, "when his bones waxed old, through his roaring all the day long, when day and night the hand of God was heavy upon him, and his moisture was turned into the drought of summer;" when he

complained unto God, "thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore: there is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger; nor any rest in my bones, because of my sin. Mine iniquities are gone over mine head as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. Deep calls unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts, all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." The 'deep of anguish' in my flesh calls to the 'deep of sorrow' in my soul, and makes a tremendous tumult within me. "My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness: I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart;" nor could he find any rest or ease till he "acknowledged his sin unto God, and confessed his transgressions," and till he had some comfortable hope that "God had forgiven the iniquity of his sin." See this sorrowful scene exemplified in a very affecting manner in the 32d and 38th Psalms. Happy is the man that walks closely with his God in the days of health and ease, that whenever it shall please his heavenly Father to try him with smarting pain, he may find sweet relief from a peaceful conscience, and humble appeals to God concerning his own sincerity and watchfulness.

4. Pain in the flesh may sometimes be sent by the hand of God, to teach us 'to wean ourselves by degrees from this body, which we love too well; this body, which has all the springs of pain in it.' How little should we be fond of this flesh and blood in the present feeble state, wherein we are continually liable to one malady or another; to the head-ache or the heart-ache, to wounds or bruises, and uneasy sensations of various kinds? Nor can the soul secure itself from them, while it is so closely united to this mortal body. And yet we are too fond of our present dwelling, though it be but a cottage of clay, feeble and ruinous, where the winds and the storms are continually ready to break in and distress us. A sorry habitation indeed for an immortal spirit, since sin has mingled so many diseases in our constitution, has made so many avenues for smart and anguish in our flesh, and we are capable of admitting pain and agonies at every pore.

Pain is appointed to be a sort of balance to the 'tempting pleasures of life,' and to make us feel that perfect happiness does not grow among the inhabitants of flesh and blood. Pain takes away the pleasures of the day and

the repose of the night, and makes life bitter in all the returning seasons. The God of nature and grace is pleased, by sending sickness and pain, to loosen his own children by degrees from their fond attachment to this fleshly tabernacle, and to make us willing to depart at his call.

A long continuance of pain, or the frequent repeated twinges of it, will 'teach a Christian and incline him to meet death with courage, at the appointed hour of release.' This will much abate the fierceness of the king of terrors, when he appears as a sovereign physician to finish every malady of nature. Death is sanctified to the holy soul, and by the covenant of grace this curse of nature is changed into a blessing. The grave is a safe retiring place from all the attacks of disease and anguish: and there are some incurables here on earth, which can find no perfect relief but in the grave. Neither maladies, nor tyrants can stretch their terrors beyond this life: and if we can but look upon death as a conquered enemy, and its sting taken away by the death of Christ, we shall easily venture into this last combat, and obtain an everlasting victory. Blessed be God for the grave as a refuge from smarting pains! Thanks be to God through Christ Jesus, who enables us to triumph over the last pain of nature, and to say, "O death where is thy sting? and O grave where is thy victory?"

In the fifth and last place, by the pains that we suffer in this body, 'we are taught to breathe after the blessedness of the heavenly state wherein there shall be no pain.' When the soul is dismissed from the bonds of flesh, and presented before God in the world of spirits without spot or blemish by Jesus our great Forerunner, it is then appointed to dwell among the "spirits of the just made perfect," who were all released in their several seasons from the body of flesh and sin. Maladies and infirmities of every kind are buried in the grave, and cease for ever; and if we survey the properties of the new raised body in the great resurrection-day, as described 1 Cor. xv, we shall find no room for pain there, no avenue or residence for smart or anguish. It will not be such a body of flesh and blood as can be a source of maladies, or subject to outward injuries; but by its own principles of innate vigour and immortality, as well as by the power and mercy of God, it shall be for ever secured from those uneasy sensations which made our flesh on earth painful and burdensome, and which

tended toward dissolution and death. It is such a body as our Lord Jesus wore at his ascent to heaven in a bright cloud, for ever incorruptible ; "for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. As we have borne the image of the earthly" Adam in the frailties and sufferings that belong to it, so shall "we also bear the image of the heavenly," even the "Lord Jesus Christ who shall change our vile body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself," Phil. iii. 21. "We shall hunger no more, we shall thirst no more, nor shall the sun light on us" with its parching beams, nor shall we be annoyed with fire or frost, with heat or cold, in those temperate and happy regions. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed" his people for ever there "with the fruits of the tree of life," and with unknown entertainments suited to a glorified state. "He shall lead them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Thus have I set before you 'the practical lessons' which pain is designed to teach us in our present state ; and we find that a body subject to maladies and pains, is a well appointed school, wherein our great Master gives us these divine instructions, and trains us up by degrees for the heavenly world. It is rough discipline indeed for the flesh, but it is wholesome for the soul : and there are many Christians here on earth that have been made to confess, that they had never learnt the practice of some of these virtues, if they had not been taught by such sort of discipline.

Pain, which was brought into human nature at first by sin, is happily suited by the providence of God to such a state of probation, wherein creatures born in the midst of sins and sorrows are by degrees recovered to the love of God and holiness, and fitted for a world of peace and joy.

But when we have done with this world, and departed from the tribes of mortal men, and from all the scenes of allurement and temptation, there is no more need that *such lessons* should be taught us in *heaven*, nor any painful scourge made use of by the Father of spirits, to carry on, or to maintain the divine work of holiness and grace within us. Let us survey this matter according to the foregoing particulars.

Is it possible that while the blessed above are surrounded with endless satisfactions flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, they should 'forget their benefactor, and neglect his praises?' Is it possible they should dwell in immortal health and ease without interruption, under the constant vital influences of the King of Glory, and yet want gratitude to the spring of all their blessings?

Nor is there any need for the inhabitants of a world, where no pains and sorrows are found, 'to learn compassion and sympathy to those who suffer,' for there are no sufferers there: but love and joy, intense and intimate love, and a harmony of joy runs through all that blessed company, and unites them in a universal sympathy, if I may so express it, or blissful sensation of each other's happiness. And I might add also, could there be such a thing as sorrow and misery in those regions, the divine principle of love would work sweetly and powerfully towards such objects in all necessary compassion.

What if pain was once made a spur to our duties, in this frail state of flesh and blood? What if pain were designed as a guard against temptation, and a means to awaken our watch against new transgression and guilt? But in a climate where all is holiness, and all is peace, in the full enjoyment of the great God, and secured by that everlasting covenant which was sealed by the blood of the Lamb, there is no more danger of sinning. The soul is moulded into the more complete likeness of God, by living for ever under the light of his countenance and the warmest beams of his love.

What if we had need of the stings of pain and anguish in time past, 'to wean us by degrees from this body, and from all sensible things,' and to make us willing to part with them all at the call of God? Yet when we arrive at the heavenly world, we shall have no more need of being weaned from earth, we shall never look back upon that state of pain and frailty with a wishful eye, being for ever satisfied in the affluence of present joys.

O glorious and happy state! where millions of creatures who have dwelt in bodies of sin and pain, and have been guilty of innumerable follies and offences against their Maker, yet are all forgiven, 'their robes are washed, and made white in the blood of Jesus,' their iniquities are cancelled for ever, and there shall not be one stroke more from the hand

of God to chasten them, nor one more sensation of pain to punish them. Divine and illustrious privilege indeed, and a glorious world, where complete sanctification of all the powers of nature shall for ever secure us from new sins, and where the springs and causes of pain shall for ever cease, both within us and without us. Our glorified bodies shall have no avenue for pain to enter; the gates of heaven shall admit no enemy to afflict or hurt us. God is our everlasting friend, and our souls shall be satisfied with the "rivers of pleasure which flow for ever at the right hand of God." Amen.

DISCOURSE X.

THE FIRST FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, OR THE FORETASTE OF HEAVEN.

Rom. viii. 23. And not only they, but ourselves also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of the body.

§ I. By a beautiful figure of speech the Apostle had been describing, in the foregoing verses, the unnatural abuse which the creatures suffer through the sins of men, when they are employed to sinful purposes and the dishonour of God their Creator. Permit me to read the words and represent the sense of them in a short paraphrase. Ver. 22. "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." The earth itself may be represented as groaning to bear such loads of iniquity, such a multitude of wicked men who abuse the creatures of God to the dishonour of him that made them. The air may be said to groan to give breath to those vile wretches who abuse it in filthiness and foolish talking, to the dishonour of God, and to the scandal of their neighbours; it groans to furnish men with breath that is abused in idolatry by the false worship of the true God, or the worship of creatures which is abominable in his sight. The sun itself may be said to groan to give light to those sinners who abuse both day-light and darkness in rioting and wantonness, in doing mischief among men and committing fresh iniquities against their Maker. The moon and stars are abused by adulterers and thieves, and other midnight sinners, when they any way afford light enough to them to guide them in their pursuit of wicked ways and practices. The 'beasts of burden' may be said also to groan and be abused when they bear the wicked sons and daughters of Adam to the accomplishment of their iniquities: and even all the parts of the brutal world, as well as of the inanimate creation, are some way or other

made to serve the detestable and wicked purposes of the sinful children of men, and may be figuratively said to groan on this account. And if we have tasted of the fruits of the Spirit of grace, we cannot but in some measure groan with the rest of the creation in expectation of the blessed day, when the creatures shall be delivered from this bondage of corruption, to which the providence of God has suffered them to be subjected in this degenerate state of things.

We hope there is a time coming, when the creatures themselves shall be used according to the original appointment of their Maker, agreeably to their own first design, and for the good of their fellow-creatures, and supremely for the honour of their God, "in that day when holiness to the Lord shall be written upon the bells of the horses; and every pot in Jerusalem shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts." Why should we not join then with the whole creation in groaning and longing after this promised time, when all the works of God shall be restored to their rightful use, and the glory of the Maker shall some way or other be made to shine in every one of them?

The Apostle then adds, in the words of my text, "and not these creatures only, but ourselves also who have the first fruits of the Spirit," we who are filled with the gifts and graces of the holy Spirit, and eminently the first fruits hereof appear in our taste and relish of the divine provisions that God has given us here in this world to prepare for a better; and even bestows upon some of his Christian servants these first fruits of the tree of paradise, these blessings, and these foretastes which are near a-kin to those of the upper world, when the saints shall be raised from the dead, when their adoption shall be clearly manifested, and they shall look like the children of God, and their bodies and all their natural powers shall be redeemed from those disorders, whether of sin or sorrow, and from all the springs and seeds of them, which they are more or less liable to feel in the present state.

Here let it be observed, that the *first fruits* of any field, or plant, or tree, are of the same kind with the full product of the harvest; therefore it is plain, that the first fruits of the Spirit, in this place, cannot chiefly signify the gifts of the Spirit, such as the gifts of tongues, or of healing, or of miracles, nor the gifts of prophecy, preaching, or praying, be-

cause these are not the employments nor the enjoyments of heaven. The 'first fruits of the Spirit' must rather refer therefore to the knowledge and holiness, the graces and the joys which are more perfect and glorious in the heavenly state, than they were ever designed to be here upon earth. Now these first fruits of graces and joys are sometimes bestowed upon Christians in this world, in such a degree as brings them near to the heavenly state: and that is the chief observation I design to draw from these words, viz. 'That God has been pleased to give some of his children here on earth several of the foretastes of the heavenly blessedness, the graces and the joys of the upper world;' as they are the first fruits of that paradise to which we are travelling: and these privileges have brought some of the saints within the verge of the courts of heaven, within the confines and borders of the celestial country. What these are I shall shew immediately; but before I represent them I desire to lay down these few cautions.

Caution 1. 'These sensible foretastes of heaven do not belong to all Christians; these are not such general blessings of the covenant of grace, of which every Christian is made partaker;' but they are special favours now and then bestowed on some particular persons by the special will of God. (1.) Such as are more eminent in faith, and holiness, and prayer than others are, such as have made great advancements in every part of religion, in mortification to the world, in spiritual-mindedness, in humility, and in much converse with God, &c. Or, (2.) sometimes these first fruits may be given unto such as are weak both in reason and in faith, and may be babes in Christ, and are not able by their reasoning powers to search out their evidences for heaven, especially under some present temptation or darkness. Or, (3.) sometimes to those who are called by providence to go through huge and uncommon trials and sufferings, in order to support their spirits, and bear up their courage, their faith and patience.

It is true, the more general and common way whereby God prepares his people for heaven, is by leading them through several steps of advancing holiness, sincere repentance, mortification of sin, weanedness from the world, likeness to God, heavenly mindedness, &c. These are indeed the usual preparatives for glory, and the surest evidences of a state of grace. Therefore let not any person

imagine he is not a true Christian, because he hath not enjoyed these special favours and signal manifestations.

Caution 2. 'If there be any who have been favoured with these peculiar blessings, they must not expect them to be constant and perpetual, nor always to be given in the same manner or same measure;' they are rare blessings and special reviving cordials; they are not the common food of Christians, nor the daily nourishment of the saints. The word of God, and the grace of Christ in the promises is our daily support, and the constant nourishment of our souls. Cordials are not given for our daily nourishment in the life of grace.

Caution 3. 'However great and rapturous these foretastes may be, let us not so depend on them as to neglect the more substantial and solid evidences for heaven, and those steps of preparation' which I have elsewhere mentioned. Let not those who have enjoyed them give a loose to their souls, and let go their watchfulness, or neglect their daily mortification and diligence in every duty. Some of these divine raptures have sometimes been so nearly counterfeited by raptures of fancy, by warm self-love, or perhaps by the deceit of evil angels, that they are not so safe a foundation for our dependence and assured hope, as the soul's experience of a sincere repentance, and general turn of heart to God, and mortification of sin, and delight in every practice of holiness. The devil sometimes "has transformed himself into an angel of light," 2 Cor. xi. 14; and there have been some who at first hearing of the gospel have had wondrous raptures. Heb. vi. 4. it is said, "they have tasted of the powers of the world to come," &c. who have yet fallen away again, and having lost all their sense and savour of divine things, have become vile apostates.

Caution 4. 'If you seem to enjoy any of these affectionate and rapturous foretastes of heaven, be jealous of the truth of them, if they have not a proportionate sanctifying influence upon your souls and your actions.'

If you find they incline you to negligence in duty, to coldness in the common practices of religion and godliness, if they make you fancy that common ordinances are a low and needless dispensation, if they seem to excuse you from diligence in the common duties of life towards man, or religion towards God, there is great reason then to suspect them. There is danger lest they should be mere sug-

gestions and deceitful workings either of your own natural passions, or the crafty snares of the artful and busy adversary of souls, on purpose to make you neglect solid religion, and make you part with what is substantial for a bright and flashy glimpse of heavenly things.

But, on the other hand, if you find that these special favours and enjoyments raise your hearts to a greater nearness to God, and more constant converse with him; if they keep you deep in humility, and in everlasting dependence on the grace of Christ in the gospel, and warm and zealous attendance on the ordinances of worship; if they teach and incline you to fulfil every duty of love to your neighbour, and particularly to your fellow Christians, then they appear to be the 'fruits of the Spirit;' and as they fit you for every duty and every providence here upon earth, there is very good reason to hope they are real visits from heaven, and are sent from the God of all grace to make you more meet for the heavenly glory.

§ II. These are the four *cautions*. I proceed now to describe some of these 'foretastes of the heavenly blessedness,' and shew how nearly they resemble the blessedness and enjoyments of the heavenly world.

First, In 'heaven there is a near view of God in his glories, with such a fixed contemplation of his several perfections, as draws out the heart into all correspondent exercises, in an uncommon, transcendent, and supreme degree.' It is described as one of the felicities of heaven, that "we shall see God." Matth. v. 8. that we shall behold him "face to face," and not in shadows and glasses, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Let us exhibit some particulars of this kind, and dwell a little upon them in the most easy and natural method.

1. In heaven the blessed inhabitants 'behold the majesty and greatness of God' in such a light as fixes their thoughts in glorious wonder and the humblest adoration, and exalts them to the highest pleasure and praise. Have you never fallen into such a devout and fixed contemplation of the 'majesty of God,' as to be even astonished at his glory and greatness, and to have your souls so swallowed up in this sight, that all the sorrows and the joys of this life, all the businesses and necessities of it hath been forgotten for a season, all things below and beneath God have seemed as nothing in your eyes? All the grandeurs and splen-

dors of mortality have been buried in darkness and oblivion, and creatures have, as it were, vanished from the thoughts and been lost, as the stars die and vanish at the rising sun and are no more seen? Have you never seen the face of God in his sublime grandeur, excellence and majesty, so as to shrink into the dust before him, and lie low at his foot with humblest adoration? And you have been transported into a feeling acknowledgment of your own nothingness in the presence of God. Such a sight the prophet Isaiah seems to have enjoyed, Isai. xi. 12, 15—17. "Behold the nations before him are as the drop of the bucket, and as the small dust of the balance, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing, they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity."

When the lips are not only directed to speak this sublime language, but the soul, as it were, beholds God in these heights of transcendent majesty, it is overwhelmed with blessed wonder and surprising delight, even while it adores in most profound lowliness and self-abasement. This is the emblem of the worship of the heavenly world, see Rev. iv. 10, where the elders, saints and prophets, martyrs, angels, and dominions, and principalities of the highest degree "cast down their crowns" at the foot of him that made them, and exalt God in his supremacy over all.

2. In heaven there are such blessed and extensive surveys of the 'infinite knowledge of God,' and his amazing *wisdom* discovered in his works, as makes even all their own heavenly improvements in knowledge and understanding to appear as mere ignorance, darkness, and folly before him. In such an hour as this is, the holy angels may charge themselves with *folly* in his sight, as he beholds them in the imperfection of their understanding. Now have you never been carried away in your meditations of the all-comprehensive knowledge of God to such a degree, as to lose and abandon all your former pride and appearances of knowledge and wisdom in all the native and acquired riches of it, and count them all as nothing in his sight? Have you never looked upward to the midnight skies, and with amazement sent your thoughts upward to him who 'calls all the stars by their names,' and brings them forth in all their sparkling glories, who marshals them in their nightly ranks and orders, and then

stood overwhelmed with sacred astonishment at the wisdom which made and ranged them all in their proper situations, and there appointed them to fulfil ten thousand useful purposes, and that not only towards this little ball of Earth, but to a multitude of upper planetary worlds? Have you never enquired into the wonders of his wisdom in framing the bodies, the limbs, and the senses of millions of animals, birds, and beasts, fishes, and insects, as well as men all around this globe, and who hath framed all their organs and powers of nature with exquisite skill, to see and hear, to run and fly, and swim, to produce their young in all their proper forms and sizes, furnished with their various powers, and to feed and nourish them in their innumerable shapes and colours, admirable for their strength and beauty? And have you not felt your souls filled with devout adoration at the unspeakable and infinite contrivances of God?

And not only his 'works of creation,' but of his *providence* too, have afforded some pious souls such devout amazement. What astonishing wisdom must that be which has created mankind on earth near six thousand years ago, and by his divine word in every age continues to create them or give them being, with all the same natural powers and parts, beauties and excellencies! That he hath wisely governed so many millions of animals with living souls or spirits in them, so many millions of intelligent creatures, endued with a free will of their own to choose or refuse what they will or will not do, and hath managed this innumerable company of beings in all ages, notwithstanding all their different and clashing opinions and customs, their crossing humours, wills and passions in endless variety, and yet hath made them all subservient to his own comprehensive designs and purposes through all ages of the world and all nations on earth! What unconceivable wisdom is that which hath effectually appointed them all to centre in the accomplishment of his own eternal counsels! And with what overwhelming amazement will this scene appear, when he shall shut up the theatre of this earth, and fold up these heavens as a curtain, and this visible structure of things shall be laid in ashes? What an astonishing view must this be of the all-surveying *knowledge*, all-comprehending *wisdom* of God, and with what holy and humble pleasure must the pious soul be filled who takes in and enjoys this scene of infinite varieties and wonders?

How near doth such an hour approach to the bliss of heaven and the raptures of contemplation, which belong to the blessed inhabitants of it?

3. I might add something of the *almighty power* of God in his creation and government of the world, in his kingdoms of nature and providence. Did not the angels rejoice at the birth-day of this universe, and "those morning stars shout for joy" at the first appearance of this *creation?* And what the inhabitants of heaven make their song, may not a holy soul be entertained with it, even to extacy and rapture? I behold, says he, in divine meditation, I behold this huge structure of the universe rising out of nothing at the voice of his command; I behold the several planets in their various orders set a moving by the same word of power. With what delightful surprise do I hear him pronouncing the words, "let there be light," and, lo 'the light appears?' Let there be earth and seas; let there be clouds and heavens; let there be sun, moon and stars, and lo the heavens, and the dry land, and the waters appear, the clouds and the stars in their various order and situation, and all the parts of the creation arise, all replenished with proper ornaments and animals according to his word. At his command nature exists in all its regions with all its furniture; the beasts, and birds, and fishes in all their forms arise, and at once they obey the several Almighty orders he gave, and by the unknown and unconceivable force of such a word they leap out into existence in ten thousand forms.

Again, what divine pleasuré is it to hear God beginning the work of his providence, and speaking those wondrous words of power to every plant and animal, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth;" and lo, in a long succession of near six thousand years the earth has been covered all over with herbs and plants, with shrubs and tall trees in all their beauty and dimensions. The air hath been filled with birds and insects, the seas and rivers with fish, and the dry land with beasts and men even to this present day. When all this philosophy is changed into devotion, it must also be transformed into divine and unutterable joy.

Nor are these things too low and mean for the contemplation of heavenly beings: for God is seen in all of them. There is not a spire of grass but the power and

wisdom of God are visible therein. And it is certain the heavenly beings must be sometimes employed in the contemplation of many of these lower wonders. The plants and beasts in desolate regions where no man inhabits, and in distant and foreign oceans and rivers, where the fishy shoals in all their variety and numbers, in all their successions and generations for near six thousand years were never seen nor known by any of the sons of men; these seem to have been created in vain, if no heavenly beings are acquainted with them, nor raise a revenue of glory to him that made them.

This almighty power therefore which made this huge universe, which sustains the frame of it every moment, and secures it from dissolving; this power which brings forth the stars in their order, and worms and creeping things in their innumerable millions, and governs all the motions of them to the purposes of divine glory, must needs affect a contemplative soul with raptures of pleasing meditation; and in these sublime meditations, by the aids of the divine Spirit, a soul on earth may get near to heaven. And with what religious and unknown pleasure at such a season doth it shrink its own being as it were into an atom, and lie in the dust and adore!

4. The 'all-sufficiency of the great God to form and to supply every creature with all that it can want or desire,' is another perfection of the divine nature, which is better known in heaven than it ever was here on earth, and affords another scene of astonishment and sacred delight. And there may be some advances towards this pleasure found among saints below, some first fruits of this heavenly felicity and joy in the all-sufficiency of God.

My whole self, body and mind, is from God and from him alone. All my limbs and powers of flesh and spirit were derived from him, and borrowed their first existence from their original pattern in his fruitful mind. All that I have of life or comfort, of breath or being, with all my blessings round about me, is owing to his boundless and eternal fulness; and all my long reaching hopes and endless expectations that stretch far into futurity, and an eternal world, are growing out of this same all-sufficient fulness.

But what do I think or speak of so little a trifle as I am? Stretch thy thoughts, O my soul, through the lengths, and

breadths, and depths of his creation, O what an unconceivable fulness of being, glory, and excellency is found in God the universal parent and spring of all! What an inexhaustible ocean of being and life, of perfection and blessedness must our God be, who supplies all the infinite armies of his creatures in all his known and unknown dominions with life and motion, with breath and activity, with food and support, with satisfaction and delight! Who maintains the vital powers and faculties of all the spirits which he hath made in all the visible and invisible worlds, in all his territories of light, and peace, and joy, and in all the regions of darkness, punishment and misery! In him all things "live and move, and have their beings," Acts xvii. 28. Psal. civ. 29, "He withdraws his breath and they die." He hath writ down all their names in his own mind, he gives them all their natures, and without him there is nothing, there can be nothing; all nature without him would have been a perpetual blank, a universal emptiness, an everlasting void, and with one turn of his will he could sink and dissolve all nature into its original nothing.

Confess, O my soul, thy own nothingness in his presence, and with astonishing pleasure and worship adore his fulness. He is thy everlasting all. Be thy dependence ever fixed upon him; thou canst not, thou shalt not live a moment without him, without this habitual dependence, and a frequent delightful acknowledgment of it. Such a devout frame as this, is heaven, and such scenes now and then passing through the soul, are glimpses of the heavenly blessedness.

§ III. Though the eternity and immensity of God might, perhaps, in their own nature, and in the reason of things, be first mentioned, yet his majesty, his power, and his wisdom in their sovereign excellency strike the souls of creatures more immediately, therefore I have put these first. However, let us now consider the eternity of the great God, and his omnipresence, and think how the spirits in heaven are affected therewith, and what kindred meditations may be derived from these perfections by the saints here on earth. I proceed therefore,

5. To the *eternity* of God: which though the most exalted spirit in heaven cannot comprehend, yet it is probable they have some nearer and clearer discovery of

it than we can have here in this mortal state, while we dwell in flesh and blood. We have nothing in this visible world that gives us so much as an example or similitude of it. The great God "who is, who was," and "who is to come" through all ages, he *is*, and *was*, and for ever *will be* the same. Let us go back as many thousand ages as we can in our thoughts, and still an eternal God was before them; a Being that had no beginning of his existence, nor will have any end of his life or duration. And as he says to Moses, my name is *I am that I am*, so as there is nothing which had any hand in his being, but all the reasons of it are derived from his own self-fulness, therefore we may say of him that *he is because he is*, and because *he will be*. He had no spring of his first beginning, nor any cause of his continued existence, but what is within himself. We can never set ourselves in too mean a light when an eternal God is near us; and every thing besides God can be but little in our eyes.

And, O my thinking powers, are ye not sweetly lost in this holy rapture, and overpowered with divine pleasure, in such meditation as this? Art thou not, O my soul, delightfully surprised with the thoughts of such self-sufficience and such an unconceivable perfection? Thy being, considered as here in this life, is not so much in the sight of God as an atom in comparison of the whole earth; and even the supposed future ages of thy existence in the eternal state are inconceivably short, when compared with the glory of that Being that never began his life or his duration.

Many things here on earth concur towards my satisfaction and peace; but if I have God my friend, I have all in him that I can possibly want or desire. Let me then live no longer upon creatures when God is all.

Let sun, moon and stars vanish, and all this visible creation disappear and be for ever annihilated if God please, he himself is still my eternal hope and never-failing spring of all my blessedness: my expectations are continually safe in his hands, and shall never fail while I am so near to him. This is joy unspeakable and akin to glory.

6. Let us meditate also on the *immensity* of God, which I think is much better expressed by his *omni-*

presence. God is wheresoever any creature is or can be; knowing immediately by his own presence all that belongs to them, all that they are or can be, all that they do or can do, all that concerns them, whether their sins or their virtues, their pains or their pleasures, their hopes or their fears. It implies also that he doth by his immediate power and influence support and govern all the creatures. In short, this *immensity* is nothing else but the infinite extent of his knowledge and his power, and it reaches to and beyond all places, as eternity reaches to and beyond all time. This the blessed above know and rejoice in, and take infinite satisfaction therein: having God, as it were surrounding them on all sides, so that they cannot be where he is not, he is ever present with his all-sufficiency ready to bestow on them all they wish or desire while he continues their God, i. e. for ever and ever. They are under the blessing of his eye, and the care of his hand, to guard them from every evil, and to secure their peace.

Let thy flesh or spirit be surrounded with ever so many thousand dangers or enemies, they cannot do thee the least damage without his leave by force or by surprise while such an Almighty Being is all around thee: nor hast thou reason to indulge any fear while the spring and ocean of all life, activity, and blessedness thus secures thee on every side. If thou hast the evidences of his children on thee, thou possessest an eternal security of thy peace.

7. 'The sovereignty and dominion' of the blessed God is a further meditation and pleasure which becomes and adorns the inhabitants of the heavenly world. There he reigns upon the throne of his glory, and the greater part of the territories which are subject to him are more in their view than our scanty powers of nature or perception can now apprehend, and a proportionable degree of pleasure is found with the saints above in these contemplations.

But in our present state of mortality our souls can only look through these lattices of flesh and blood, and make a few scanty and imperfect inferences from what they always see, and hear, and feel. And yet the glorious sovereignty and dominion of the blessed God may so penetrate the soul with a divine sense of it here on earth, as to raise up a heaven of wonder and joy within.

Adore him, O my soul, who surveys and rules all things which he has made with an absolute authority, and is for ever uncontroulable. How righteous a thing is it that he should give laws to all the beings which his hand hath formed, which his breath hath spoken into life, and especially that rank which his favour hath furnished with immortality? How just that he should be obeyed by every creature without the least reluctance or reserve, without a moment's delay, and that to all the length of their existence?

Submit to his government with pleasure, O my nature, and be all ye my powers of soul and body in everlasting readiness to do whatsoever he requires, and to be whatsoever he appoints. Wilt thou have me, O Lord, lie under sickness or pain, wilt thou have me languish under weakness and confinement? I am at thy foot, I am for ever at thy disposal. Wilt thou have me active and vigorous in thy service? Lord, I am ready with utmost cheerfulness. Wilt thou confine me to painful idleness and long patience? Lord here I am, do with me what seemeth good unto thee, I am ready to serve thy purposes here, or thy orders in the unknown world of spirits, when thou shalt dissolve this mortal frame: I lay down these limbs in the dust of death at thy command: I venture into the regions of angels and unbodied minds at thy summons. I will be what thou wilt, I will go when thou wilt, I will dwell where thou wilt, for thou art always with me, and I am entirely thine. I both rejoice and tremble at thy sovereignty and dominion over all. God cannot do injury to a creature who is so entirely his own property; God will not deal unkindly with a creature who is so sensible of his just dominion and supremacy, and which bows at the foot of his sovereignty with so much relish of satisfaction.

8. Let us next take notice of the *perfect purity* of the nature of God, his *universal holiness*, the *rectitude* of the divine nature manifested in all his thoughts, his works, and his words, all perfectly agreeable to the eternal rules of truth and righteousness, and at the furthest distance from every thing that is false and faulty, every thing that is or can be dishonourable to so glorious a Being. Have we never seen God in this light, in the glory of his holiness, his universal rectitude, and the everlasting harmony of all his perfections in exact correspondence with all the

notions we can have of truth and reason? And has not God appeared then as a glorious and lovely Being? And have we not at the same time beheld ourselves as unclean, and unholy creatures, in one part or other of our natures, ever ready to jar or fall out with some of the most pure and perfect rules of holiness, justice or truth? Have we not seen all our sins and iniquities in this light, with utmost abhorrence and highest hatred of them, and looked down upon ourselves with a deep and overwhelming sense of shame and displicence against our depraved and corrupted natures, and abased ourselves as Job does, in dust and ashes, and not daring to open our mouths before him? Job xlii. 6. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, and I abhor myself in dust and ashes." The least spot or blemish of sin grows highly offensive and painful to the eyes of a saint in this situation.

Every little warping from truth in our conversation, every degree of insincerity or fraud becomes a smarting uneasiness to the mind in the remembrance of our past follies in the present state. There is the highest abhorrence of sin among all the heavenly inhabitants, and this sight of God in the beauties of his holiness, and his perfect rectitude, is an everlasting preservative to holy souls against the admission of an impure or unholy thought. And therefore some divines have supposed, that the angels at their first creation were put into a state of trial before they were admitted to this full sight of the beauty of God in his holiness, which would have secured them from the least thought or step towards apostacy.

O my soul, of what happy importance it is to thee to maintain, as long as possible, this sense of the *purity*, *rectitude* and *perfection* of the nature of the blessed God, "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," with the least regard of approbation or allowance? And what infinite condescension is it in such a God to find out and appoint a way of grace, whereby such shameful polluted creatures as we are should ever be admitted into his presence to make the least address to his majesty, or to hope for his favour?

Besides, in this sublime view of the *holiness* of God, we shall not only love God better than ever, as we see him more amiable under this view of his glorious attributes,

but we shall grow more sincere and fervent in our love to all that is holy, to every fellow Christian, to every saint in heaven and on earth: we shall not bear any estrangedness or alienation from those who have so much of the likeness of God in them. They will ever appear to be the "excellent of the earth, in whom is all our delight:" their supposed blemishes will vanish at the thought of their likeness to God in holiness: and especially our blessed Lord Jesus, the Son of God, will be most precious and all-glorious in our eyes as he is the most perfect image of his Father's holiness. There is nothing in the blessed God, but the man Christ Jesus bears a proportionable resemblance to it, as far as a creature can resemble God,* and he will consequently be highest in our esteem under God the Lord and Father of all.

9. The ever-pleasing attribute of divine 'goodness and love' is another endless and joyful theme or object of the contemplation of the heavenly world. There this perfection shines in its brightest rays, there it displays its most triumphant glories, and kindles a flame of everlasting joy in all the sons of blessedness.

But we in this world may have such glimpses of this goodness and love as may fill the soul with unspeakable pleasure, and begin in it the first fruits and earnest of heaven. When we survey the inexhaustible ocean of goodness which is in God, which fills and supplies all the creatures with every thing they stand in need of; when we behold all the tribes of the sons of men supported by his boundless sufficiency, his bounty and kind providence, and refreshed with a thousand comforts beyond what the mere necessities of nature require: in such an hour if we feel the least flowings of goodness in ourselves towards others, we shall humble ourselves to the dust, and cry out in holy amazement, Lord, what is an atom to a mountain? what is a drop to a river, a sea of beneficence? what is a shadow to the eternal substance? what good thing is there in time or in eternity, which I can possibly want which

* If the "man Christ Jesus" could be viewed either by saints above, or saints on earth, as separate from the Divine Person of the eternal Son, he would be shorn of the brightest rays of his glory. God forbid, that our meditations should ever terminate in his human nature, or that we should conceive so meanly of the Son of God, as to regard him as merely a creature!—Ed.

is not abundantly supplied out of thine overflowing fulness? Hence arises the eternal satisfaction of all the holy and happy creation in being so near to thee, and under the everlasting assurances of thy love. I can do nothing but fall down before thee in deepest humility, and admire, adore, and everlastingly love thee, who hast assumed to thyself the name of love, 1 John iv. 8, "God is love."

§ IV. Thus far our joys may rise into an imitation of the joys above, in the devout 'contemplation of divine perfections.'

And not only the 'perfections of God' considered and surveyed singly in themselves, but the *union* and blessed *harmony* of many of them in the divine works and transactions of Providence and of grace, especially in the gospel of Christ, administer further matter for contemplation and pleasure among the happy spirits in heaven: and so far as this enjoyment may be communicated to the saints here on earth, they may be also said to have a foretaste of the business and pleasure of heaven. Let us take notice of this harmony in several instances.

1. In the sacred constitution of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ as God and man united in one personal agent: here majesty and mercy give a glorious instance of their union, here all the grandeur and dignity of Godhead condescends to join itself in union with a creature, such as man is, a spirit dwelling in flesh and blood. 1 Tim. ii. 5. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, even the man Christ Jesus." But this man is personally united to the blessed God, he is "God manifested in the flesh." He is a man in "whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," to constitute one all-sufficient Saviour of miserable and fallen mankind. What an amazing stoop or condescension is this for the eternal Godhead thus to join itself to a creature, and what a surprising exaltation is this of the creature, for the man Christ Jesus thus to be assumed into so near a relation to the blessed God? All the glories that result from this divine contrivance and transaction are not to be enumerated on paper, nor by the best capacity of writers here on earth: the heavenly inhabitants are much better acquainted with them.

Again, here is an example of the harmony and co-operation of unsearchable wisdom and all-commanding power in the person of the blessed Jesus; and what a happy

design is hereby executed, namely, the reconciliation of sinful man and the holy and glorious God: and who could do this but one who was possessed of such wisdom and such power? When there was no creature in heaven or earth sufficient for this work, God was pleased to appoint such an union between a creature and Creator, between God and man, as might answer all the inconceivable purposes concealed in his thought. If there be wanting a person fit to execute any of his infinite designs, he will not be frustrated for want of an agent, he will appoint God and man to be so nearly united as to become one agent to execute this design.

2. 'In the manner of our salvation,' (viz.) by an 'atonement for sin.' The great God did not think it proper, nor agreeable to his sublime holiness, to receive sinful man into his favour without an atonement for sin, and a satisfaction made to the Governor of the world for the abuse and violation of his holy law here on earth; and therefore he appointed such a sacrifice of atonement as might be sufficient to do complete honour to the law-giver, as well as to save and deliver the offender from death. Therefore Jesus was made a man capable of suffering and dying, that he might honour the majesty and the justice of the broken law of God, and that he might do it completely by the union of Godhead to this man and Mediator;* the dignity of whose divinity diffuses itself over all that he did and all that he suffered, so as to make his obedience completely acceptable to God instead of thousands of creatures, and fully satisfactory for the offence that was given him by them; here is a sacrifice provided equal to the guilt of sin, and therefore sufficient to take it away.

You see here what a blessed harmony there is between the *justice* of God doing honour to his own law, and his *compassion* resolved to save a ruined creature. Here is no blemish cast upon the strict justice and righteousness of God, when the offender is forgiven in such a method as may do honour to justice and mercy at once. Rom. iii. 24, 25, "We are justified freely by his grace through the

* It is by the union of the two natures that the Lord Jesus is a proper Mediator. It is incorrect to say that the "Godhead" was united "to this man and Mediator." It was the Son, or Word, not the Godhead, that "became flesh;" and thus humbling himself, gave himself for us, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.—Ed.

redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness," even his perfect governing justice, though he passes by and pardons the sins of a thousand criminal creatures; 'to declare,' I say, 'at this time his righteousness, that he might *appear** *to* be just' to his own authority and law, while he justifies the sinful man who believeth or trusteth in Jesus the Mediator as becoming a proper sacrifice and propitiation for sin.

3. By the 'sanctification of our nature.' There is also another remarkable harmony between the holiness of God and his mercy in this work of the salvation of sinful man. The guilt of sin is not only to be forgiven and taken away by a complete atonement and sacrifice, but the sinful nature of this ruined creature is to be changed into holiness, is to be renewed and sanctified by the blessed Spirit, and reformed into the image of God his Maker. He must not only be released from punishment by forgiveness, but he must be restored to the image of God by sanctifying grace; that so he may be fit company for the rest of the favourites of God in the upper world; that he may be qualified to be admitted into this society, where perfect purity and holiness are necessary for all the inhabitants of this upper world, and for such near attendants on the blessed God. In that happy state nothing shall enter there that defileth, Rev. xxi. 27, and therefore concerning the criminals amongst the Corinthians, as vile and as offensive to the pure and holy God as they are represented, 1 Cor. vi. 9—11, viz. "Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, drunkards, &c. but, *it is said*, they are washed, but they are sanctified, but they are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Now when the souls of the saints here on earth are raised to such divine contemplations, what transporting satisfaction and delight must arise from the surprising 'union and harmony' of the attributes of the blessed God in these his transactions? And especially when the soul in the lively exercise of grace and view of its own pardon, justification, and restored holiness, looks upon itself as one of these happy favourites of the majesty of heaven; it

* The Scripture says, not that "he might *appear* to be;" but that "he might *be* just." God's actions are not *show*; they are *realities*.—Ed.

cries out as it were in holy amazement, 'What a divine profusion is here of wisdom and power, glory and grace, to save a wretched worm from everlasting burnings, and to advance a worthless rebel to such undeserved and exalted glories!'

§ V. 'The wonders of divine perfections united in the success of the gospel,' give an ecstasy of joy sometimes to holy souls. Not only do these views of the united perfections of God, as they are concerned in the contrivance of the gospel, entertain the saints above with new and pleasurable contemplations, but the wonders of divine *wisdom*, *power* and *grace*, united and harmonizing in 'the propagation and success of the gospel,' become a matter of delightful attention and survey to the saints on high.

This is imitated also in a measure by the children of God here on earth. Have you never felt such a surprising pleasure in the view of the attributes of God, his grace, wisdom, and power in making these divine designs so happily efficacious for the good of thousands of souls? If there "be joy in heaven among the angels of God" at the conversion "of a sinner," what perpetual messages of unknown satisfaction and delight did the daily and constant labours of the blessed Apostle Paul send to the upper world? What perpetual tidings were carried to the worlds on high of such and such souls, converted unto God from gross idolatry, from the worship of dumb idols, from the vain superstition of their heroes and mediator-gods, and from the impure and bloody sacrifices of their own countrymen, whereby they intended to satisfy their gods for their own iniquities, and to reconcile themselves to these invented gods, these demons or devils which were deified by the folly and madness of sinful men? What new hallelujahs must it put into the mouths of the saints and angels on high, to see the true and living God worshipped by thousands that had never before known him, and to see Jesus the Mediator in all the glories of his divine offices admired and adored by those who lately had either known nothing of him, or been shameful revilers and blasphemers of his majesty.

And what an unknown delight is diffused through many of the saints of God now here on earth upon such tidings, not only from the foreign and heathen countries, but even

some that have professed Christianity, but under gross mistakes and miserable fogs of darkness and superstition? What an unconceivable and overwhelming pleasure has surprised a Christian sometimes in the midst of his zealous worship of God and his Saviour, to hear of such tidings of new subjects in multitudes submitting themselves to their divine dominion?

And even in our day, whensoever we hear of the work of grace begun by the ministry of the word awakening a drowsy and lethargic soul from its dangerous sleep on the brink of hell, rousing a negligent and slothful creature from his indolence and carelessness about the things of eternity; or *again*, in making a heart soft and impressive to the powers of divine grace, which was before hard as the nether millstone; and especially when multitudes of these tidings come together from distant places, as of late we have heard from New England, and several of those plantations, from Scotland, and several of her assemblies, what additional scenes of heavenly joy and pleasure have been raised amongst the pious souls, both those who relate and those who hear them.

§ VI. Foretastes of heaven are sometimes derived from 'the overflowing sense of the love of God' let in upon the soul.

The spirits above who are surrounded with this blessedness and this love, and rejoice in the everlasting assurance of it, cannot but be filled with intense joy. What can be a greater foundation of complete blessedness and delight than the immediate sensation and assurance of being beloved by the glorious, and supreme, and the all-sufficient Being, who will never suffer his favourites to want any thing he can bestow upon them to make them happy in perfection, and for ever? All creatures are under his present view and immediate command; there is not the least of them can give disturbance to any of the favourites of heaven, who dwell in the midst of their Creator's love; nor is there any creature that can be employed towards the complete happiness of the saints on high, but is for ever under the disposal of that God who has made all things, and it shall be employed upon every just occasion for the display of his love to his saints.

Some have imagined, that that 'perfect satisfaction of soul which arises from a good conscience, speaking peace

inwardly in the survey of its sincere desire to please God in all things, and having with uprightness of heart fulfilled its duty,' is the supreme delight of heaven. But it is my opinion God has never made the felicity of his creatures to be drawn so entirely out of themselves, or from the spring of their own bosom, as this notion seems to imply. God himself will be *all in all* to his creatures; and all their original springs of blessedness as well as being are in him, and must be derived from him. It is therefore the overflowing sense of being beloved by a God almighty and eternal, that is the supreme fountain of joy and blessedness in every reasonable nature, and the endless security of this happiness is joy everlasting in all the regions of the blessed above.

Now a taste of this kind is heavenly blessedness even on this earth, where God is pleased to bestow it on his creatures; and the glimpses of it bring such ecstacies into the soul as can hardly be conceived, or revealed to others, but it is best felt by them who enjoy it.

§ VII. 'Foretastes of heaven in the fervent emotions of soul in love to Jesus Christ.'

What the love and strong affections of the blessed saints above towards Jesus Christ their Lord and Saviour may impress of joy on their spirits, is not possible for us to learn in the present state; but there are some who have even here on earth felt such transcendent affections to Jesus the Son of God; even though they have never enjoyed the sight of him, yet they love him with most intense and ardent zeal; their devotion almost swallows them up and carries them away captive above all earthly things, and brings them near to the heavenly world. There is an unknown joy which arises from such intense love to an object so lovely and so deserving; such is that which is spoken concerning the saints to whom St. Peter wrote, 1 Pet. i. 8, "Whom having not seen, ye love, in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." It is through this divine taste of love, and joy, and glory communicated by the blessed Spirit, revealing the things of Christ to their souls, that many of the confessors and martyrs in the primitive ages and in latter times, have not only joyfully parted with all their possessions and their comforts in this life, but have followed the call of God through prisons

and deaths of a most dreadful kind ; through racks, and fires, and many torments for the sake of the love of Jesus. And perhaps there may be some in our day who have had so lively and strong a sensation of the love of Christ let in upon their souls, that they could not only be content to be absent from all their carnal delights for ever, but even from their intellectual and more spiritual entertainments, if they might be for ever placed in such a situation to Jesus Christ, as to feel the everlasting beams of his love let out upon them, and to rejoice in him with perpetual delight. As he is the nearest image of God the Father, they can love nothing beneath God equal to their love of him, nor delight in anything beneath God equal to their delight in Jesus Christ. Indeed their love and their joy are so wrapped up in the great and blessed God as he appears in Christ Jesus, that they do not usually divide their affections in this matter, but love God supremely for ever, as revealing himself in his most perfect love in Christ Jesus unto their souls. How near this may approach to the glorified love of the saints in heaven, or what difference there is between the holy ones above and the saints below in this respect, may be hard to say.

§ VIII. 'Foretastes of heaven in the transcendent love of the saints to each other.' I might here ask some advanced saints,

Have you never seen or heard of a fellow Christian growing into such a near resemblance to the blessed Jesus, in all the virtues and graces of the Spirit, that you would willingly part with all the attainments and honours that you have already arrived at, which make you never so eminent in the world or the church, as to be made so near a conformist to the image of the blessed Jesus as this fellow Christian has seemed to be ?

Have you never seen or read of the glories and graces of the Son of God exemplified in some of the saints in so high a degree, and at the same time been so divested of self, and so mortified to a narrow selflove, as to be satisfied with the lowest and the meanest supports of life, and the meanest station in the church of Christ here on earth, if you might but be favoured to partake of that transcendent likeness to the holy Jesus, as you would fain imitate and possess ?

Have you never had a view of all the virtues and gra-

ces of the saints, derived from one eternal fountain, the blessed God, and flowing through the mediation of Jesus his Son, in so glorious a manner, that you have longed for the day when you shall be among them, and receive your share of this blessedness? Have you never found yourself so united to them in one heart and one soul, that you have wished them all the same blessings that you wished to yourself, and that without the least shadow of grudging or envy, if every one of them were partaker as much as you? There is no *envy* among the heavenly inhabitants; nor doth St. Paul receive the less because Cephas or Apollos has a large share. Every vessel has its capacity enlarged to a proper extent by the God of nature and grace, and every vessel is completely filled, and feels itself for ever full and for ever happy. Then, there cannot be found the shadow of envy amongst them.

Now, to sum up the view of these things in short; who is there that enjoys these blessed evidences of an interest in the inheritance on high, who is there that has any such foretastes of the felicity above, but must join with the whole creation in groaning for that great day, when all the children of God shall appear in the splendor of their adoption, and every thing in nature and grace among them shall attain the proper end for which it was at first designed? And whensoever any such Christian hears some of the last words in the Bible pronounced by our Lord Jesus, "Surely I come quickly," he must immediately join the universal echo of the saints with unspeakable delight, "even so come, O Lord Jesus."

DISCOURSE XI.

SAFETY IN THE GRAVE, AND JOY AT THE RESURRECTION.

Job. xiv. 13, 14, 15. O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me in secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me! If a man die shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. Thou shalt call and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands.

Before we attempt to make any improvement of these words of Job for our present edification, it is necessary that we search out the true meaning of them. There are two general senses of these three verses, which are given by some of the most considerable interpreters of Scripture, and they are exceedingly different from each other.

The *first* is this. Some suppose Job under the extremity of his anguish to long after death here, as he does in some other parts of this book, and to desire that God would cut him off from the land of the living, and "hide him in the grave," or, at least, take him away from the present stage of action, and conceal him in some retired and solitary place, dark as the grave is, till all the days which might be designed for his pain and sorrow were finished: and that God would "appoint him a time" for his restoration to health and happiness again in this world, and raise him to the possession of it, by calling him out of that dark and solitary place of retreat; and then Job would *answer* him, and appear with pleasure at such a call of Providence.

Others give this sense of the words, that though the pressing and overwhelming sorrows of this good man constrained him to long for death, and he entreated of God that he might be sent to the "grave as a hiding-place," and thus be delivered from his present calamities, yet he had some divine glimpse of a resurrection or *living again*, and he hopes for the happiness of a future state when God should call him out of the grave. He knew that the blessed God would have 'a desire to' restore 'the work of

his own hands' to life again, and Job would 'answer the call' of his God into a resurrection with holy pleasure and joy.

Now there are four or five *reasons* which incline me to prefer this latter sense of the words, and to shew that the comforts and hope which Job aspires to in this place, are only to be derived from a resurrection to final happiness.

1. The express words of the text are, "O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave!" Not in a darksome place like the grave; and where the literal sense of the words is plain and agreeable to the context, there is no need of making metaphors to explain them. There is nothing that can encourage us to suppose that Job had any hope of happiness in this world again, after he was gone down to the grave, and therefore he would not make so unreasonable a petition to the great God. This seems to be too foolish and too hopeless a request for us to put into the mouth of so wise and good a man.

2. He seems to limit the continuance of man in the state of death to the duration of the heavens, ver. 12th, "man lieth down and riseth not till the heavens be no more." Not absolutely *for ever* does Job desire to be hidden in the grave, but till the dissolution of all these visible things, these heavens and this earth, and the great rising-day for the sons of men. These words seem to have a plain aspect towards the resurrection.

And especially when he adds, "they shall not be wakened nor raised out of their sleep." The brutes when dying are never said to *sleep* in Scripture, because they shall never rise again; but this is a frequent word used to signify the death of man both in the Old Testament and in the New, because he only lies down in the grave for a season, as in a bed of sleep, in order to awake and arise hereafter.

3. In other places of this book, Job gives us some evident hints of his hope of a resurrection, especially that divine passage and prophecy, when he spake as one surrounded with a vision of glory, and filled with the light and joy of faith. Job xix. 25, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though

my reins be consumed within me." But in many parts of this book the good man lets us know, that he had no manner of hope of any restoration to health and peace in this life. Job vii. 6, 7, 8, "My days are spent without hope: mine eye shall no more see good: the eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more: thine eyes are upon me, and I am not." Ver. 21. "Now shall I sleep in the dust, thou shalt seek me in the morning and I shall not be." Job xvii. 15. "Where is now my hope? As for my hope, who shall see it?" He and his hope seemed "to go down to the bars of the pit together, and to rest in the dust." And if Job had no hope of a restoration in this world, then his hopes must point to the resurrection of the dead.

4. If we turn these verses here, as well as that noble passage in Job xix, to the more evangelical sense of a resurrection, the truths which are contained in the one and the other, are all supported by the language of the New Testament: and the express words of both these texts are much more naturally and easily applied to the evangelical sense, without any strain and difficulty.

The expressions in the xixth of Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. have been rescued by many wise interpreters from that poor and low sense which has been forced upon them, by those who will not allow Job to have any prospect beyond this life: and it has been made to appear to be a bright glimpse of divine light and joy, a ray or vision of the sun of righteousness breaking in between the dark clouds of his pressing sorrow. And that the words of my text demand the same sort of interpretation, will appear further by these short remarks, and this paraphrase upon them.

Job had been speaking, ver. 7, &c. that "there is hope of a tree when it is cut down that it will sprout again" visibly, and bring forth boughs; but when "man gives up the ghost" he is no more visible upon earth. "Where is he?" Job does not deny his future existence, but only intimates that he does not appear in the place where he was; and in the following verses he does not say, a dying man shall never rise, or shall 'never be awakened out of his sleep;' but asserts that "he rises not till" the dissolution of "these heavens" and these visible things: and by calling death a *sleep*, he supposes an awaking time, though it may be distant and far off.

Then he proceeds to long for death, "O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave! that thou wouldst keep me secret till thy wrath be past!" till these times and seasons of sorrow be ended, which seem to be the effect of divine wrath or anger. But then I entreat "thou wouldst appoint me a set time" for my tarrying in the grave, "and remember me" in order to raise me again. Then with a sort of surprise of faith and pleasure he adds, "If a man die shall he live again? Shall these dry bones live?" And he answers in the language of hope; "All the days of that appointed time" of thine "I will wait till that glorious change shall come. Thou shalt call" from heaven, "and I will answer thee" from the dust of death. I will appear at thy call and say, "Here am I. Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands," to raise me again from the dead, whom thou hast made of clay, and fashioned into life.

From the words thus expounded, we may draw these several *observations*, and make a short *reflection* upon each of them, as we pass along.

Obs. I. This world is a place wherein good men are exposed to great calamities, and they are ready to think the anger or wrath of God appears in them.

Obs. II. The grave is God's known hiding-place for his people.

Obs. III. God has appointed a set time in his own counsels for all his children to continue in death.

Obs. IV. The lively view of a happy resurrection, and a well-grounded hope of this blessed change, is a solid and divine comfort to the saints of God, under all trials of every kind both in life and death.

Obs. V. The saints of God who are resting in their beds of dust, will arise joyfully at the call of their heavenly Father.

Obs. VI. God takes delight in his works of nature, but much more when they are dignified and adorned by the operations of divine grace.

Obs. VII. How much are we indebted to God for the revelation of the New Testament, which teaches us to find out the blessings which are contained in the Old, and to fetch out the glories and treasures which are concealed there?

Let us dwell a while upon each of these, and endeavour to improve them by a particular application.

Obs. I. 'This world is a place wherein good men are exposed to great calamities, and they are ready to think the anger or wrath of God appears in them.' This mortal life and this present state of things, are surrounded with crosses and disappointments; the loss of our dearest friends, as well as our own pains and sicknesses, have so much anguish and misery attending them, that they seem to be the seasons of divine wrath, and they grieve and pain the spirit of many a pious man, under a sense of the anger of his God. It must be confessed in general that misery is the effect of sin, for sin and sorrow came into the world together. It is granted also, that God sometimes *afflicts* his people "in anger, and corrects them in his hot displeasure," when they have sinned against him in a remarkable manner. But this is not always the case.

The great God was not really angry with Job when he suffered him to fall into such complicated distresses; for it is plain, that while he delivered him up into the hands of Satan to be afflicted, he vindicates and honours him with a divine testimony concerning his piety. Job i. 8, "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and avoideth evil." Nor was he angry with his Son Jesus Christ, when it "pleased the Father to bruise him and put him to grief," when he "made his soul an offering for sin," and he was "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted," Isai. liii. To these we may add Paul, the best of the Apostles, and the greatest of Christians, who was abundant in labours and sufferings beyond all the rest. See a dismal catalogue of his calamities, 2 Cor. xi. 23, &c. What variety of wretchedness, what terrible persecutions from men, what repeated strokes of distress came upon him by the providence of God, which appeared like the effects of divine wrath or anger? But they were plainly designed for more divine and blessed purposes, both with regard to God, with regard to himself, and to all the succeeding ages of the Christian church.

God does not always smite his own people to punish sin and shew his anger; but these sufferings are often appointed for the 'trial of their Christian virtues and graces,' for the exercise of their humility and their patience, for the proof of their steadfastness in religion, for the honour of the grace of God in them, and for the increase of their own future weight of glory. "Blessed is the man that

endures temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him," Jam. i. 12. "The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. ii. 10. "Our light afflictions which are but for a moment, are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17.

However, upon the whole, this world is a very troublesome and painful place to the children of God. They are subject here to many weaknesses and sins, temptations and follies; they are in danger of new defilements; they go through many threatening perils and many real sorrows, which either are the effects of the displeasure of God, or, at least, carry an appearance of divine anger in them. But there is a time when these shall be finished, and sorrow shall have its last period: there is a time when these calamities "will be overpast," and shall return no more for ever.

Reflection. Why then, O my soul, why shouldst thou be so fond of dwelling in this present world? Why shouldst thou be desirous of a long continuance in it? Hast thou never found sorrows and afflictions enough among the scenes of life, to make thee weary of them? And when sorrow and sin have joined together, have they not grievously embittered this life unto thee? Wilt thou never be weaned from these sensible scenes of flesh and blood? Hast thou such a love to the darknesses, the defilements, and the uneasinesses which are found in such a prison as this is, as to make thee unwilling to depart when God shall call? Hast thou dwelt so long in this tabernacle of clay, and dost thou not "groan, being burdened?" Hast thou no desire to a release into that upper and better world, where sorrows, sins and temptations have no place, and where there shall never be the least appearance or suspicion of the displeasure of thy God towards thee?

Obs. II. 'The grave is God's known hiding-place for his people.' It is his appointed shelter and retreat for his favourites, when he finds them overpressed either with present dangers or calamities, or when he foresees huge calamities and dangers, like storms and billows. ready to overtake them; Isa. lvii. 1, "The righteous is taken away

from the evil to come." God our heavenly Father beholds this evil advancing forward through all the present smiles of nature, and all the peaceful circumstances that surround us. He hides his children in the grave from a thousand sins, and sorrows, and distresses of this life, which they foresaw not: and even when they are actually beset behind and before, so that there seems to be no natural way for their escape, God calls them aside into the chambers of death, in the same sort of language as he uses in another case, Isa. xxvi. 20, "Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment till the indignation be overpassed."

And yet perhaps it is possible, that this very language of the Lord in Isaiah may refer to the grave, as God's hiding-place, for the verse before promises a resurrection. "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." And if we may suppose this last verse to have been transposed by any ancient transcribers, so as to have followed originally verse 20, or 21, it is very natural then to interpret the whole paragraph concerning death, as God's hiding-place for his people, and their rising again through the virtue of the resurrection of Christ as their joyful release.

Many a time God is pleased to shorten the labours, and travels and fatigues of good men in this wilderness, and he opens a door of rest to them where he pleases, and perhaps surprises them into a state of safety and peace, "where the weary are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling;" and holy Job seems to desire this favour from his Maker here.

Sometimes indeed, in the history of this book, he seems to break out into these desires in too rude and angry a manner of expression; and in a fit of criminal impatience he murmurs against God for upholding him in the land of the living: but at other times, as in this text, he represents his desires with more decency and submission. Every desire to die is not to be construed sinful and criminal. Nature may ask of God a relief from its agonies and a period to its sorrows; nor does grace utterly forbid it, if there be also an humble submission and resignation

to the will of God, such as we find exemplified by our blessed Saviour, "Father, if it be thy will let this cup pass from me; yet not as I will, but as thou wilt."

On this second *observation*, I desire to make these three *reflections*.

Reflec. 1. Though a good man knows that death was originally appointed as a curse for sin, yet his faith can trust God to turn that curse into a blessing. He can humbly ask his Maker to release him from the painful bonds of life, to hasten the slow approaches of death, and to hide him in the grave from some overwhelming sorrows. This is the glory of God in his covenant of grace with the children of men, that he "turns curses into blessings," Deut. xxiii. 5. And the grave, which was designed as a prison for sinners, is become a place of shelter to the saints, where they are hidden and secured from rising sorrows and calamities. It is God's known hiding-place for his own children from the envy and the rage of men; from all the known and unknown agonies of nature, the diseases of the flesh, and the distresses of human life, which perhaps might be overbearing and intolerable.

Why, O my fearful soul, why shouldst thou be afraid of dying? Why shouldst thou be frighted at the dark shadows of the grave, when thou art weary with the toils and crosses of the day? Hast thou not often desired the shadow of the evening, and longed for the bed of natural sleep, where thy fatigues and thy sorrows may be forgotten for a season? And is not the grave itself a sweet sleeping-place for the saints, wherein they lie down and forget their distresses, and feel none of the miseries of human life, and especially since it is softened and sanctified by the Son of God lying down there? Why shouldst thou be afraid to lay thy head in the dust? It is but entering into 'God's hiding-place,' into his chambers of rest and repose: it is but committing thy flesh, the meaner part of thy composition, to his care in the dark for a short season. He will hide thee there, and keep thee in safety from the dreadful trials which perhaps would overwhelm thy spirit. Sometimes in the course of his providence he may find it necessary that some spreading calamity should overtake the place where thou dwellest, or some distressing stroke fall upon thy family, or thy friends, but he will hide thee under ground before it comes, and thus disap-

point all thy fears, and lay every perplexing thought into rest and silence.

Reflect. 2. Let it be ever remembered, that the grave is God's hiding-place, and not our own. We are to venture into it without terror when he calls us; but he does not suffer us to break into it our own way without his call. Death and life are in the hands of God, and he never gave the keys of them to mortal men, to let themselves out of this world when they please, nor to enter his hiding-place without his leave.

Bear up then, O my soul, under all the sorrows and trials of this present state, till God himself shall say, *it is finished;* till our blessed Jesus, who has the keys put into his hands, shall open the door of death, and give thee an entrance into that dark and peaceful retreat. It is a safe and silent refuge from the bustle and the noise, the labours and the troubles of life; but he that forces it open with his own hands, how will he dare to appear before God in the world of spirits? What will he answer, when with a dreadful frown the great God shall demand of him, "friend, how comest thou in hither?" Who sent for thee, or gave thee leave to come? Such a wretch must venture upon so rash an action at the peril of the wrath of God, and his own eternal destruction.

Our blessed Jesus, who has all the vast scheme of divine counsels before his eyes, by having the books of his Father's decrees put into his hands, he knows how long it is proper for thee, O Christian, to fight and labour, to wrestle and strive with sins, temptations and difficulties in the present life. He knows best in what moment to put a period to them, and pronounce thee conqueror. Fly not from the field of battle for want of holy fortitude, though thy enemies and thy dangers be never so many; nor dare to dismiss thyself from thy appointed post, till the Lord of life pronounce the word of thy dismission.

Sometimes I have been ready to say within myself, why is my life prolonged in sorrow? Why are my days lengthened out to see further wretchedness? Methinks the "grave should be ready for me, and the house appointed for all the living." What can I do further for God or for man here on earth, since my nature pines away with painful sickness, my nerves are unstrung, my spirits dissipated, and my best powers of acting are enfeebled and

almost lost? Peace, peace, O thou complaining spirit! Dost thou know the counsels of the Almighty, and the secret designs of thy God and thy Saviour? He has many deep and unknown purposes in continuing his children amidst heavy sorrows, which they can never penetrate or learn in this world. Silence and submission becomes thee at all times. "Father, not my will, but thy will be done."

And let it be hinted to thee, O my soul, that it is much more honourable to be weary of this life, because of the sins and temptations of it, than because of the toils and sorrows that attend it. If we must "groan in this tabernacle being burdened," let the snares, and the dangers, and the defilements of it be the chief springs of thy groaning and the warmest motives to request a release. God loves to see his people more afraid of sin than of sorrow. If thy corruptions are so strong, and the temptations of life so unhappily surround thee, that thou art daily crying out, "who shall deliver thee from the body of sin and death," then thou mayest more honourably send up a wish to heaven, "O that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest! O that God would hide me in the grave" from my prevailing iniquities, and from the ruffling and disquieting influence of my own follies and my daily temptations! But never be thou quite weary of doing or suffering the will of thy heavenly Father, though he should continue thee in this mortal life a length of years beyond thy desires, and should withhold thee from his secret place of retreat and rest.

A constant and joyful readiness at the call of God to depart hence, with a cheerful patience to continue here during his pleasure, is the most perfect and blessed temper that a Christian can arrive at: it gives God the highest glory, and keeps the soul in the sweetest peace.

Reflect 3. This one thought, that the 'grave is God's hiding-place,' should compose our spirits to silence, and abate our mourning for the loss of friends, who have given sufficient evidence that they are the children of God. Their heavenly Father has seized them from the midst of their trials, dangers and difficulties, and given them a secure refuge in his own appointed place of rest and safety. Jesus has opened the door of the grave with his golden key, and hath let them into a chamber of repose. He has concealed them in a silent retreat, where temptation and

sin cannot reach them, and where anguish and misery can never come.

When I have lost therefore a dear and delightful relative or friend, or perhaps many of them in a short season are called successively down to the dust, let me say thus within myself, "It is their God and my God has done it. He saw what new temptations where ready to surround them in the circumstances of life wherein they stood. He beheld the trials and difficulties that were ready to encompass them on all sides, and his love made a way for their escape. He opened the dark retreat of death, and hid them there from a thousand perils which might have plunged them into guilt and defilement. He beheld this as the proper season to give them a release from a world of labour and toil, vanity and vexation, sin and sorrow. They are *taken away from the evil to come*, and I will learn to complain no more. The blessed Jesus to whom they had devoted themselves, well knew what allurements of gaiety and joy might have been too prevalent over them, and he gave them a kind escape lest their souls should suffer any real detriment, lest their strict profession of piety should be soiled or dishonoured. He knew how much *they were able to bear, and be would lay upon them* no further burden. He saw rising difficulties approaching, and new perils coming upon them beyond their strength, and he fulfils their own promises, and glorifies his own faithfulness, by opening the door of his well-known hiding-place, and giving them a safe refuge there. He keeps them there in secret from the corruptions of a public life, and the multiplied dangers of a degenerate age, which might have divided their hearts from God and things heavenly: and perhaps he guards them also in that dark retreat from some long and languishing sickness, some unknown distress, some overbearing flood of misery, which was like to come upon them had they continued longer on the stage of life.

"Let this silence thy murmuring thoughts, O my soul; let this dry up thy tears which are ready to overflow on such an occasion. Dare not pronounce it a stroke of anger from the hand of God, who divided them from the tempting or the distressing scenes of this world, and kindly removed them out of the way of danger. This was the wisest method of his love to guard them from many a

folly and many a sorrow, which he foresaw just at the door."

Will the wounded and complaining heart go on to groan and murmur still, 'But my son was carried off in the prime of life, or my daughter in her blooming years; they stood flourishing in the vigour of their nature, and it was my delight to behold their growing appearances of virtue and goodness, and that in the midst of ease, and plenty, and prospects of happiness, so far as this world can afford it?'

But could you look through the next year to the end of it? Could you penetrate into future events, and survey the scenes of seven years to come? Could your heart assure itself of the real possession of this imaginary view of happiness and peace? Perhaps the blessed God saw the clouds gathering afar off, and at a great distance of time, and in much kindness he housed your favourite from unknown trials, dangers and sorrows. So a prudent gardener, who is acquainted with the sky, and skilful in the signs of the seasons, even in the month of May, foresees a heavy tempest rising in the edge of the horizon, while a vulgar eye observes nothing but sunshine; and he who knows the worth and the tenderness of some special plants in his garden, houses them in haste, lest they should be exposed and demolished by the sweeping rain or hail.

You say, 'these children were in the bloom of life, and in the most desirable appearance of joy and satisfaction:' but is not that also usually the most dangerous season of life, and the hour of most powerful temptation? Was not that the time when their passions might have been too hard for them, and the deluding pleasures of life stood round them with a most perilous assault? And what if God, out of pure compassion, saw it necessary to hide them from an army of perils at once, and to carry them off the stage of life with more purity and honour? Surely when the great God has appointed it, when the blessed Jesus has done it, we would not rise up in opposition and say, 'But I would have had them live longer here at all adventures: I wish they were alive again, let the consequence be what it will.' This is not the voice of faith or patience; this is not the language of holy submission and love to God, nor can our souls approve of such irregular storms of ungoverned affection, which oppose themselves to the divine will, and ruffle the soul with criminal disquietude.

There are many, even of the children of God, who had left a more unblemished and a more honourable character behind them, if they had died much sooner. The latter end of life hath sometimes sullied their brightness, and tarnished the glory they had acquired in a hopeful youth. Their growing years have fallen under such temptations, and been defiled and disgraced by such failings, as would have been entirely prevented had they been summoned away into God's hiding-place some years before. Our blessed Jesus walks among the roses and lilies in the garden of his church, and when he sees a wintry storm coming upon some tender plants of righteousness, he hides them in earth to preserve life in them, that they may bloom with new glories when they shall be raised from that bed. The blessed God acts like a tender Father, and consults the safety and honour of his children, when the hand of his mercy snatches them away before that powerful temptation comes, which he foresees would have defiled and distressed, and almost destroyed them. They are not lost, but they are gone to rest a little sooner than we are. Peace be to that bed of dust where they are hidden, by the hand of their God, from unknown dangers! Blessed be our Lord Jesus, who has the keys of the grave, and never opens it for his favourites but in the wisest season!

Obs. III. 'God has appointed a set time in his own counsels for all his children to continue in death.' Those whom he has hidden in the grave he remembers that they lie there, and he will not suffer them to abide in the dust for ever. When Job entreats of God that he may be hidden from his sorrows in the dust of death, he requests also that "God would appoint a set time" for his release, "and remember him." His faith seems to have had a glimpse of the blessed resurrection. Our senses and our carnal passions would cry out, where is Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the rest of the ancient worthies, who have been long sleepers in their beds of repose for many thousand years? But faith assures us, that God numbers the days and the months of their concealment under ground, he knows where their dust lies, and where to find every scattered atom against the great restoring day. They are unseen indeed and forgotten of men, but they are under the eye and the keeping of the blessed God. He watches over their sleeping dust, and while the world has forgotten and

lost even their names, they are every moment under the eye of God, for they stand written in his book of life, with the name of the Lamb at the head of them.

Jesus, his Son, had but three days appointed him to dwell in this hiding-place, and he rose again at the appointed hour. Other good men, who were gone to their grave not long before him, arose again at the resurrection of Christ, and made a visit to many in Jerusalem. Their appointed hiding-place was but for a short season ; and all the children of God shall be remembered in their proper seasons in faithfulness to his Son to whom he has given them. The *Head* is raised to the mansions of glory, and the *members* must not forever lie in dust.

Reflection. Then let all the saints of God wait with patience for the appointed time when he will call them down to death, and let them lie down in their secret beds of repose, and in a waiting frame commit their dust to his care till the resurrection. "All the days of my appointed time (says Job) I will wait till my change come." The word 'appointed time' is supposed to signify *warfare* in the Hebrew: as a centinel, when he is fixed to his post by his general, he waits there till he has orders for a release. And this clause of the verse may refer either to *dying* or *rising again*, for either of them is a very great and important *change* passing upon human nature, whether from life to death, or from death to life.

It is said by the prophet Isaiah, chap. xxviii. 10, "He that believeth shall not make haste," i. e. he that trusts in the wisdom and the promised mercy of God will not be too urgent or importunate in any of his desires. It is for want of faith that nature sometimes is in too much haste to die, as Job in some of his expressions appears to have been, or as Elijah perhaps discovered himself when he was wandering in the wilderness disconsolate and almost despairing, or as the prophet Jeremiah sufficiently manifested, when he cursed the day of his birth, or as Jonah was, that peevish prophet, when he was angry with God for not taking away his life ; but the ground of it was, he was vexed because God did not destroy Nineveh according to his prophecy. These are certain blemishes of the children of God left upon record in his word, to give us warning of our danger of impatience, and to guard us against their sins and follies. And since we know that

God has appointed the seasons of our entrance into death, and into the state of the resurrection, we should humbly commit the disposal of ourselves to the hand of our God, who will bestow upon us the most needful blessings in the most proper season.

Do not the "spirits of the just made perfect" wait in patience for the great and blessed rising-day which God has appointed, and for the illustrious change of their bodies from corruption and darkness to light, and life, and glory? God has promised it, and that suffices, and supports their waiting spirits, though they know not the hour. The "Father keeps that in his own hand," and perhaps reveals it to none but his Son Jesus, who is exalted to be the governor and judge of the world. There are millions of souls waiting in that separate state for the accomplishment of these last and best promises, ready to shout and rejoice when they shall see and feel that bright morning dawning upon them.

Wait therefore, O my soul, as becomes a child of God in the wilderness among many trials, darknesses, and distresses. He has stripped thee perhaps of one comfort after another, and thy friends and dear relatives in succession are called down to the dust; they are released from their conflicts, and are placed far out of the reach of every temptation; and it is not thy business to prescribe to God at what hour he shall release thee also. Whensoever he is pleased to call thee to lay down thy flesh in the dust, and to enter into God's hiding-place, meet thou the summons with holy courage, satisfaction and joy, enter into the chamber of rest till all the days of sin, sorrow and wretchedness are overpast. Lie down there in a waiting frame, and commit thy flesh to his care and keeping till the hour in which he has appointed thy glorious change.

Obs. IV. 'The lively view of a happy resurrection, and a well grounded hope of this blessed change, is a solid and divine comfort to the saints of God, under all trials of every kind, both in life and death.' The faith and hope of a joyful rising-day has supported the children of God under long distresses and huge agonies of sorrow which they sustain here. It is the expectation of this desirable day that animates the soul with vigour and life to fulfil every painful and dangerous duty. It is for this we expose ourselves to the bitter reproaches and persecutions

of the wicked world ; it is for this that we conflict with all our adversaries on earth, and all the powers of darkness that are sent from hell to annoy us ; it is this joyful expectation that bears up our spirits under every present burden and calamity of life.

What could we do in such a painful and dying world, or how could we bear with patience the long fatigues of such a wretched life, if we had no hope of rising again from the dead ? Surely "we are the most miserable of all men" in days of public persecution, "if we had hope only in this life," 1 Cor. xv. 19. It is for this that we labor, and suffer, and endure whatsoever our heavenly Father is pleased to lay upon us. It is this confirms our fortitude, and makes "us steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58. It is this that enables us to bear the loss of our dearest friends with patience and hope, and assuages the smart of our sharpest sorrows. For since we believe that "Jesus died and rose again," so we rejoice in hope that "they which sleep in Jesus shall be brought with him" at his return, and shall appear in brighter and more glorious circumstances than ever our eyes were blessed with here on earth, 1 Thes. iv. 13. This teaches us to triumph over death and the grave in divine language, "O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?"

Reflection. What are thy chief burdens, O my soul? Whence are all thy sighs and thy daily groanings? What are thy distresses of flesh or spirit? Summon them all in one view, and see whether there be not power and glory enough in a resurrection to conquer and silence them all, and to put thy present sorrows to flight?

Dost thou dwell in a 'vexing and persecuting world,' amongst oppressions and reproaches ? But those who reproach and oppress are but mortal creatures, who shall shortly go down to the dust, and then they shall tyrannize and afflict thee no more. The great rising-day shall change the scene from oppression and reproach to dominion and glory. When "they lie down in the grave like" beasts of slaughter, "death shall feed on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning, when God shall redeem thy soul from the power of the

grave." Thy God shall hide thy body from their rage in his own appointed resting-place, and he shall receive thy soul, and keep it secure in his own presence, till that blessed morning break upon this lower creation; then shalt thou "arise and shine, for the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

Do the 'calamities which thou sufferest proceed from the hand of God?' Art thou disquieted with daily pain, with sicknesses and anguish in thy flesh? or art thou surrounded with crosses and disappointments in thy outward circumstances? Are thy spirits sunk with many loads of care and pressing perplexities? Canst thou not forget them all in the vision that faith can give thee of the great rising-day? Canst thou not say in the language of faith, "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us?" Then the head and the heart shall ake no more, and every circumstance around thee shall be pleasing and joyful for ever.

Or art thou tenderly affected with the 'loss of pious friends,' who have been very dear and desirable? Perhaps thy sensibilities here are too great and painful: they are such indeed as nature is ready to indulge, but are they not more than God requires, or the gospel allows? Do not thy thoughts dwell too much on the gloom and darkness of the grave? O think of that bright hour when every saint shall rise from the dark retreats of death with more complete characters of beauty, holiness and pleasure than ever this world could shew them in! They are not perished, but sent a little before us into 'God's hiding-place,' where though they lie in dust and darkness, yet they are safe from the dangers and vexations of life; but they shall spring up in the happy moment into immortality, and shall join with thee in a mutual surprise at each other's divine change.

Or dost thou feel the 'corruptions of thy heart' working within thee, and the sins of thy nature restless in their endeavours to bring defilement upon thy soul, and guilt upon thy conscience? Go on and maintain the holy warfare against all these rising iniquities. This thy warfare shall not continue long. Thou shalt find every one of these sins buried with thee in the grave, but they shall rise to assault thee no more. The saint shall leave every

sin behind him when he breaks out of the dust at the summons of Christ, and thou shalt find no seeds of iniquity in thy body when it is raised from the grave. "Holiness to the Lord" shall be inscribed upon all thy powers for ever.

Or art thou perplexed, O my soul, 'at the near prospect of death,' and all the terrors and dismal appearances that surround it? Art thou afraid to lie down in the cold and noisome grave? Does thy nature shudder at it as a gloomy place of horror? These indeed are the prejudices of sense; but the language of faith will tell thee, it is only 'God's hiding-place,' where he secures his saints till all the ages of sin and sorrow are overpast. Look forward to the glorious morning when thou shalt rise from the dust among ten thousand of thy fellows, every one in the image of the Son of God, with their "bodies formed after the likeness of his glorious body," and rejoicing together with divine satisfaction in the pleasure of this heavenly change. Try whether the meditation of these glories, and the distant prospect of this illustrious day, will scatter all the gloom that hovers round the grave, and vanquish the fiercest appearances of the king of terrors.

What is there, O my soul, among all the miseries thou hast felt, or all that thou fearest, that can sink thy courage, if the faith of a resurrection be but alive and wakeful? But this leads me to the

Obs. V. 'The saints of God, who are resting in their beds of dust, will arise joyfully at the call of their heavenly Father.' "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee," said holy Job. The command of God creates life, and gives power to the dead to arise and speak. 'I come, O Lord, I come.' When Jesus, the Son of God, as with the trumpet of an archangel, shall pronounce the word which he spake to Lazarus, "Arise and come forth," dust and rottenness shall hear the call from heaven, and the clods of corruption all round the earth shall arise into the form of man. The saints shall appear at once and answer to that divine call, arrayed in a glory like that of angels; an illustrious host of martyrs and confessors for the truth; an army of heroes and valiant sufferers for the name and cause of God and his Son; an innumerable multitude of faithful servants who have finished their work, and who are laid down at rest.

How shall Adam, the father of our race, together with the holy men of his day, be surprised, when they shall awake out of their long sleep of five thousand years? How shall all the saints of the intermediate ages break from their beds of darkness with intense delight? And those who lay down but yesterday in the dust shall start up at once with their early ancestors, and answer to the call of Jesus from one end of time to the other, and from all the ends of the earth. They shall arise together to 'meet the Lord in the air, that they may be for ever with the Lord.'

Never was any voice obeyed with more readiness and joy than the voice or trumpet of the great archangel, summoning all the children of God to awake from their long slumbers, and to leave their dusty beds behind them, with all the seeds of sin and sorrow, which are buried and lost there for ever. Never did any army on earth march with more speed and pleasure, at the sound of the trumpet, to attend their general to a new triumph, than this glorious assembly shall arise to meet their returning Lord, when this last trumpet sounds, and when he shall come the second time in the full glories of his person and his offices, as Lord and Judge of the world, to bring his faithful followers into complete salvation.

Reflection. Whensoever, O my soul, thou feelest any reluctance to obey the summons of death, encourage thy faith, and scatter thy fears, by waiting for the call of God to a blessed resurrection. Jesus himself lay down in the grave at his Father's command, and he arose with joy at the appointed hour as the head of the new creation, as the first-born from the dead; and he has orders given him by the Father to summon every saint from their graves at the long appointed hour. Because Jesus arose and lives, they shall arise and live also. O may my flesh lie down in the dust with all courage and composure, and rejoice to escape into a place of rest and silence, far away from the noise and tumult, the hurry and bustle of this present life; being well assured that the next sound which shall be heard is the voice of the Son of God, "Arise ye dead!" Make haste then, O blessed Jesus, and finish thy divine work here on earth: I lay down my head to sleep in the dust, waiting for thy call to awake in the morning.

Obs. VI. 'God takes delight in his works of nature,

but much more when they are dignified and adorned by the operations of divine grace.' "Thou wilt have a desire," saith the good man in my text, "to the work of thy own hands." Thou hast moulded me and fashioned me at first by thy power, thou has created me by thy spirit, and though thou hidest me for a season in one of thy secret chambers of death, thou wilt raise me again to light and life, "and in my flesh shall I see God."

When the Almighty had created this visible world, he surveyed his works on the seventh day, and pronounced them all *good*, and he took delight in them all before sin entered and defiled them. And when he has delivered the creatures of his power from the bondage of corruption, and has purged our souls and our bodies from sin and from every evil principle, he will again delight in the sons and daughters of Adam whom he has thus cleansed and refined by his sovereign grace, and has qualified and adorned them for his own presence. "He will sing and rejoice over them, and rest in his love," Zephan. iii. 17.

He will love to see them with his Son Jesus at their head, diffusing holiness and glory through all his members. Jesus the Redeemer will love to see them round him; for he has bought them with his blood, and they are a treasure too precious to be for ever lost. He will rejoice to behold them rising at his call into a splendour like his own, and they "shall be satisfied when they awake" from death "into his likeness," and appear in the image of his own glorious body, fit heirs for the inheritance of heaven, fit companions for the blessed angels of light, and prepared to dwell for ever with himself.

Reflection. And shall not we who are the work of his hands have a desire to him that made us? to him that redeemed us? to him that has new created and moulded us into his own likeness? Do we not long to see him? Have we not a desire to be with him, even though we should be "absent from the body" for a season? But much more should we delight to think of being "present with the Lord," when our whole natures, body and soul, shall appear as the new workmanship of almighty power; our souls new created in the image of God, and our bodies new born from the dead, into a life of immortality.

VII. The last observation is of a very general nature, and spreads itself through all my text, and that is, 'how

much are we indebted to God for the revelation of the New Testament, which teaches us to find out the blessings which are contained in the Old, and to fetch out the glories and treasures which are concealed there?' The writers of the gospel have not only pointed us to the rich mines where these treasures lie, but have brought forth many of the jewels and set them before us. It is this gospel that "brings life and immortality to light by Jesus Christ." 2 Tim. i. 10. It is this gospel that scatters the gloom and darkness which was spread over the face of the grave, and illuminates all the chambers of death. Who could have found out the doctrine of the resurrection contained in that word of grace given to Abraham, "I am thy God," if Jesus, the great prophet, had not taught us to explain it thus, Matth. xxii. 31? "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

We who have the happiness to live in the days of the Messiah, know more than all the ancient prophets were acquainted with, and understand the word of their prophecies better than they themselves; for "they searched what or what manner of time the spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow," 1 Pet. i. 11. But we read all this fairly written in the gospel. Do you think that good David could have explained some of his own Psalms into so divine a sense, or Isaiah given such a bright account of his own words of prophecy, as St. Paul has done in several places of the New Testament, where he cites and unfolds them? Could those illustrious ancients have given us such 'abundant consolation and hope through the Scriptures,' which they themselves 'wrote aforetime,' as this Apostle has done, Rom. xv. 4? Do you think Job could have read us such a lecture on his own expressions in this text, or in that bright prophecy in the xixth chapter, as the very meanest among the ministers of the gospel can do by the help of the New Testament? For in point of clear discoveries of divine truths and graces, "the least in the kingdom of the Messiah is greater than John the Baptist and all the prophets," and our blessed Jesus has told us so, Matth. xi. 11. 13. And by the aid and influences of his Spirit we may be taught yet further to search into these hidden mines of grace, and bring forth new treasures of glory.

Reflection. Awake, O my soul, and bless the Lord with all thy powers, and give thanks with holy joy for the gospel of his Son Jesus. Jesus by his rising from the dead has left a divine light upon the gates of the grave, and scattered much of the darkness that surrounded it. It is the gospel of Christ which casts a glory even upon the bed of death, and spreads a brightness upon the graves of the saints in the lively views of a great rising-day. O blessed and surprising prospect of faith! O illustrious scenes of future vision and transport! When the Son of God shall bring forth to public view all his redeemed ones, who had been long hidden in night and dust, and shall present them all to God the Father in his own image, bright and holy, and unblemished, in the midst of all the splendors of the resurrection! O blessed and joyful voice, when he shall say with divine pleasure, "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me:" 'we have both passed through the grave, and I have made them all conquerors of death, and vested them with immortality according to thy divine commission! *Thine they were,* O Father, *and thou hast given them* into my hands, and behold I have brought them all safe to thy appointed mansions, and I present them before thee without spot or blemish.'

And many a parent of a pious household in that day, when they shall see their sons and their daughters around them, all arrayed with the beams of the Sun of righteousness, shall echo with holy joy to the voice of the blessed Jesus, "Lord, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me." 'I was afraid, as Job once might be when his friends suggested this fear; I was afraid that *my children had sinned against God, and he had cast them away for their transgression:* but I am now convinced, when he seized them from my sight, he only took them out of the way of temptation and danger, and concealed them for a season in his safe hiding-place. I mourned in the day-time for a lost son or a lost daughter, and in the night my couch was bedewed with my tears. I was scared with midnight dreams on their account, and the visions of the grave terrified me because my children were there. I gave up myself to sorrow for fear of the displeasure of my God both against them and against me. But how unreasonable were these sorrows? How groundless were my fears? How gloriously am I disappointed this blessed morning?

I see my dear offspring called out of that long retreat where God had concealed them, and they arise to meet the divine call. I hear them answering with joy to the happy summons. My eyes behold them risen in the image of my God and their God: they are near me, they stand with me at the right hand of the Judge; now shall we rejoice together in the sentence of eternal blessedness from the lips of my Lord and their Lord, my Redeemer and their Redeemer.' *Amen.*

Among my papers I have found a speech spoken at a grave, which I transcribed almost fifty years ago, and which deserves to be saved from perishing. It was pronounced many years before at the funeral of a pious person, by a minister there present, supposed to be the Rev. Mr. Peter Sterry; and the subject of it being suited to this discourse, I thought it not improper to preserve it here.

"CHRISTIAN friends, though sin be entered into the world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned; yet it seems not wholly suitable to our Christian hope, to stand by and see the grave with open mouth take in, and swallow down any part of a precious saint, and not bring some testimony against the devourer. And yet that our witness may be in righteousness, we must first own, acknowledge, and accept of that good and serviceableness that is in it.

"For through the death and resurrection of our dear Redeemer, death and the grave are become sweetened to us, and sanctified for us: so that as death is but a sleep, the grave through his lying down in it and rising again, is become as a bed of repose to them that are in him, and a safe and quiet hiding-place for his saints till the resurrection.

"And in this respect we do for ourselves, and for this our dearly beloved in the Lord, accept of thee, O grave, and readily deliver up her body to thee; it is a body that hath been weakened and wearied with long affliction and anguish, we freely give it unto thee; receive it, and let it have in thee a quiet rest from all its labours; for thus we read it written of thee, *there the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest.*

"Besides, it is, O grave, a body that hath been sweetly embalmed by a virtuous, pious, peaceable conversation, by several inward openings and outpourings of the spirit of life, by much patience and meekness in strong trials and

afflictions. Receive it, and let it enjoy thee, what was once deeply impressed on her own heart, and in a due season written out with her own hand, *a sabbath in the grave:* for thus also we find it recorded of our Lord and her Lord, that enjoyed the rest of his last sabbath in the grave.

"But we know thee, O grave, to be also a devourer, and yet we can freely deliver up the body into thee.

"There was in it a contracted corruptibility, dishonour and weakness; take them as thy proper prey, they belong to thee, and we would not withhold them from thee. Freely swallow them up for ever, that they may appear no more.

"Yet know, O grave, there is in the body, considered as once united to such a soul, a divine relation to the Lord of life; and this thou must not, thou canst not dissolve or destroy. But know, and even before thee, and over thee be it spoken, that there is a season hastening wherein we shall expect it again from thee in incorruption, honour and power.

"We now sow it into thee in *dishonour*, but expect it again returned from thee in *glory;* we now sow it into thee in *weakness*, we expect it again in *power;* we now sow it into thee a *natural body*, we look for it again from thee a *spiritual body.*

"And when thou hast fulfilled that end for which the Prince of life, who took thee captive, made thee to serve, then shalt thou who hast devoured be thyself also swallowed up; for thus it is written of thee, *O death, I will be thy plague, O grave, I will be thy destruction.* And then we shall sing over thee what also is written of thee, *O death, where is now thy sting? O grave, where is now thy victory?* Amen."

Note. A line or two is altered in this speech, to suit it more to the understanding and the sense of the present age.—Watts.

DISCOURSE XII.

THE NATURE OF THE PUNISHMENTS IN HELL.

MARK. ix. 46. Where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.

INTRODUCTION.

THESE words are a short description of *hell*, by the lips of the Son of God, who came down from heaven: and he who lay in the bosom of his father, and was intimate in all the counsels of his mercy and justice, must be supposed to know what the terrors and the wrath of God are, as well as his compassion and his goodness.

It is confessed, that a discourse on this dreadful subject is not a direct ministration of grace and the glad tidings of salvation, yet it has a great and happy tendency to the same end, even the salvation of sinful men; for it awakens them to a more piercing sight, and to a more keen sensation of their own guilt and danger; it possesses their spirits with a more lively sense of their misery, it fills them with a holy dread of divine punishment, and excites the powerful passion of fear to make them flee from the wrath to come, and betake themselves to the grace of God revealed in the gospel.

The blessed Saviour himself, who was the most perfect image of his Father's love, and the prime minister of his grace, publishes more of these terrors to the world, and preaches hell and damnation to sinners more than all the prophets or teachers that ever went before him; and several of the Apostles imitate their Lord in this practice. They kindle the flames of hell in their epistles, they thunder through the very hearts and consciences of men with the voice of damnation and eternal misery, to make stupid sinners feel as much of these terrors in the present prospect as is possible, in order to escape the actual sensation of them in time to come.

Such awful discourses are many times also of excellent use to keep the children of God, and the disciples of Jesus, in a holy and watchful frame, and to affright them from returning to sin and folly, and from the indulgence of any temptation, by setting these terrors of the Lord before their eyes. O may these words of his terror, from the lips of one of the meanest of his ministers, be attended with divine power from the convincing and sanctifying Spirit, that they may answer these happy ends and purposes, that they may excite a solemn reverence of the dreadful majesty of God in all our souls, and awaken us to repentance for every sin, and a more watchful course of holiness!

Let us then consider the expression in my text: When our Saviour mentions the word 'hell,' he adds, 'where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;' in which description we may read the *nature* of this punishment, and the *perpetuity* of it.

First, We shall consider the 'nature of this punishment,' as it is represented by the metaphors which our Saviour uses; and if I were to give the most natural and proper sense of this representation, I would say that our Saviour might borrow this figure of speech from these three considerations.

1. 'Worms' and 'fire' are the two most general ways whereby the bodies of the dead are destroyed; for whether they are buried or not buried, worms devour those who, by the custom of their country, are not burnt with fire. And perhaps he might refer to the words of Isaiah lxvi. 24, where the prophet seems to foretel the punishment of those who will not receive the gospel, when it shall be preached to all nations: They, says he (that is the true Israel, the saints of God, or Christians,) 'they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men who have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.' It is highly probable that this is only a metaphor referring to the punishment of the souls of obtinate unbelievers in hell; for it would be but a very small punishment indeed, if only their dead bodies were devoured by worms or fire, or rather no punishment at all besides a memorial of their sin.

2. Consider, the 'gnawing of worms' and the 'burning

of fire' are some of the most smart and severe torments that a living man can feel in the flesh; therefore the vengeance of God, upon the souls of obstinate sinners, is set forth by it in our Saviour's discourse; and it was probably well known amongst the Jews, as appears by some of the apocryphal writings; Judith xvi. 17, 'Woe to the nation that rises up against my kindred; the Lord Almighty will take vengeance of them in the day of judgment, putting fire and worms in their flesh, and they shall feel them and weep for ever.' And Eccles. vii. 16, 17, 'Number not thyself among the multitude of sinners, but remember the wrath will not tarry long. Humble thy soul greatly, for the vengeance of the ungodly is fire and worms.'

3. Consider, whether 'worms' feed upon a living man or devour his dead body, still 'they are such as are bred in his own flesh; but fire is brought by other hands,' and applied to the flesh: even so this metaphor 'of a worm' happily represents the 'inward torments,' and the 'teazing and vexing passions' which shall arise in the souls of those unhappy creatures, who are the just objects of this punishment; and it is called 'their worm,' that worm that belongs to them, and is bred within them by the foul vices and diseases of their souls. But the 'fire which never shall be quenched' refers rather to the pains and anguish which come 'from without,' and that chiefly from the hand of God, the righteous avenger of sin, and from his indignation, which is compared to fire.

§ I. '*The worm that dieth not.*'

Let us begin with the first of these, viz. the 'torments which are derived from the gnawing worm, those agonies and uneasy passions which will arise and work in the souls of these wretched creatures,' so far as we can collect them from the word of God, from the reason of things, and the working powers of human nature.

When an impenitent sinner is cast into hell, we have abundant reason to suppose, that the evil temper of his soul, and the vicious principles within him, are not abated, but his natural powers, and the vices which have tainted them and mingle with them, are awakened and enraged into intense activity and exercise, under the first sensations of his dreadful punishment. Let us endeavour to conceive then what would be the ferments, the raging passions, and the vexing inward torments of a wicked

man, seized by the officers of an almighty Judge, borne away by the executioners of vengeance, and plunged into a pit of torture and smarting misery, while at the same time he had a most fresh and piercing conviction ever present, that he had brought all this mischief upon himself by his own guilt and folly.

I. The first particular piece of wretchedness therefore, contained in this metaphor, is the 'remorse and terrible anguish of conscience which shall never be relieved.' How terrible are the racks of a guilty conscience here on earth, which arise from a sense of past sins? How does David cry out and roar under the disquietude of his spirit? Psal. xxxii. 3, 'While I kept silence' and confessed not mine iniquity, 'my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long, day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, and my moisture is turned into the drought of summer:' and again, Psal. xxxviii. 4, 'Mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.' God has wisely so framed the nature and spirit of man, that a reflection on his past misbehaviour should raise such keen anguish at his heart; and thousands have felt it in a dreadful degree, even while they have continued in this world, in the land of life and hope.

But when death has divided the soul from this body, and from all the means of grace, and cut off all the hopes of pardoning mercy forever, what smart beyond all our thoughts and expressions must the sinner feel from such inward wounds of conscience? And it gives a twinging accent to every sorrow when the sinner is constrained to cry out, 'It is I, it is I who have brought all this upon myself. Life and death were set before me in the world where once I dwelt, but I refused the blessings of eternal life, and the offers of saving grace. I turned my back upon the ways of holiness which led to life, and renounced the tenders of divine mercy: I chose the paths of sin, and folly, and madness, though I knew they led to everlasting misery and death. Wretch that I was, to choose those sins and these sorrows, though I knew they were necessarily joined together! I am sent into those regions of misery which I chose for myself, against all the kind admonitions and warnings of God and Christ, of his gospel and his ministers of grace! O these cursed eyes of mine, that led me into the snares of guilt and folly! these cursed hands

that practised iniquity with greediness! these cursed lips of mine, which dishonoured my Maker! O these cursed appetites and passions, and this obstinate will, which have wrought my ruin! this cursed body and soul, that have procured their own everlasting wretchedness!' These thoughts will be like a gnawing worm within, which will prey upon the spirit forever. The fretting smart arising from this vexatious worm must be painful in the highest extreme, when we know it is 'a worm which will never die,' which will forever hang at our heart, and sting our vitals in the most tender and sensible parts of them without intermission, as well as without end.

Here on earth the stings and scourges of conscience meet with some intervals of relief, from necessary business which employs the mind, from gay company which diverts the heart, from the refreshments of nature by day, or from the sweet repose of returning night. But in the world to come every hour shall be filled up with these cutting sorrows, for there is no season of refreshment, no diversion of mind, no sleeping there. All things are forever awake in that world! There are no shadows and darkness to hide us where this torment shall not find us, for it is bred and lives within. There is no couch there to lull the conscience into soft repose, and to permit the sufferer to forget his agonies. Ancient crimes shall rise up and stand forever before the eyes of the sinner in all their glaring forms, and all their heinous aggravating circumstances. These will sit heavy upon the spirit with teazing and eternal vexation. O dreadful state of an immortal creature, which must forever be its own tormentor, and shall know no relief through all the ages of its immortality! Think of this bitter anguish of soul, O sinner, to guard thee from sin in an hour of strong temptation.

II. Another spring of this torment will be the 'overwhelming sense of an angry God, and utter despair of his love, which is lost forever.' It was the thought of the displeasure of God, which pierced the soul of David with such acute pain, when he remembered his sins, Psal. li. 3, 4, "My sin is ever before me: against thee, against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." And again he pleads with God, Psal. vi. 1, "O Lord, chasten me not in thine anger, nor vex me in thy sore displeasure." He could face an host of armed men without fear, but he

could not face an angry God, 'whose loving kindness is life,' and the loss of whose love is worse than death. Psal. lxxvii. 3, "I remembered God," said he, "and was troubled," i. e. "lest he should be favourable no more, and shut up his tender mercies in everlasting anger." This was the terror of that good man, under a deep sense of his crimes, and of God hiding his face from him, and this even while he was in the land of the living, and was not cast out beyond all hope.

But when the grave shuts its mouth on the sinner, and he is thrust out into utter darkness, where the light of God's countenance never shines, nor will shine, how insupportable must such anguish be?

Here in this life perhaps a profane wretch has imagined he could live well enough 'without God in the world,' and was content to have nothing to do with him in a way of worship or dependence here. He determined with himself, that the less he could think of God the better, and so forgot his Maker days without number. But in those regions of hell, whither the sinner shall be driven, he can never forget an angry God, nor fly out of the reach of his terrors.

'I am now convinced, saith he, but too late, that happiness dwells in his presence, and rivers of pleasures flow at his right hand; but this happiness I shall never see, these streams of pleasure I shall never taste; he is gone forever with all his love and with all his blessings, God is gone with all his graces and pardons beyond my reach. He stands afar off from my groanings. He told me of it heretofore in the ministry of his word; but, wretch that I was! I would not hearken, I would not believe. I was invited by the Son of his love to receive his gospel, and to partake of forgiving mercy; he stretched out his hands with divine compassion, and offered to receive my soul to his grace, and to wash away my defilements with his own blood; he beseeched me to repent and return to God, and assured me he would secure his Father's favour to me, and a place among the mansions of his glory: but cursed rebel that I was, to despise this salvation, and resist the offers of such love, and to renounce such divine compassion! These offers of mercy are forever finished; I shall never see him more as surrounded with the blessings of his grace, but as the minister of his Father's justice, and

the avenger of his abused mercy. There is no other Saviour, no other intercessor, to procure divine favour for me, and my hopes are overwhelmed and buried in the eternal despair of his love.'

III. There will be found also among the damned, 'a constant enmity, and malice, and hatred against the blessed God, which can never satisfy nor ease itself by revenge.' It seems very strange indeed that a creature should design revenge against his Maker; but thus it is in these dismal regions of hell. Every wicked man is by nature at enmity with God, and in a state of rebellion; and when this enmity is wrought up to malice, under a sense of his punishing hand, then arises that cursed and detestable desire in the soul of revenging itself against its Maker. The fallen angels, those wicked spirits, have found this dismal temper of mind reigning in them: they hate the blessed God with intense malice, because his governing justice sees fit to punish their pride and other iniquities, and they would fain be revenged of him by destroying mankind who were made after his image. Their malice cannot reach him in the heights of his glory; but they can reach man his creature made in his likeness, and they began to take their revenge there near six thousand years ago. All the sins, and all the miseries of the sons and daughters of Adam, from the beginning of the world to this day, are owing to this madness of malice, this hatred of God in the hearts of evil angels, who were cast out from heaven and the regions of happiness: they began to exert this malice early, and still they are everlasting tempters of men, in order to avenge themselves upon a righteous God.

But alas, what a wretched satisfaction must the damned spirits of men propose to themselves in such a wild and extravagant attempt? The very name and mention of this iniquity seems to put our souls and our ears to pain, while we dwell in flesh and blood; but as cursed and hateful a temper as this is, it is the very spirit and temper of apostate angels; and this will be thy temper and thy spirit, O wilful and impenitent sinner, when thou shalt have obstinately sinned thyself into damnation, and canst never deliver thyself from the punishing hand of God.

Think, O my soul, at what a dreadful distance such creatures must be from every glimpse of peace and happiness, whose hearts are filled with such blasphemy and

rage, and who would be attempting such vain and impious efforts of mingled insolence and madness. Read, O ye foolish and wilful trangressors, read the temper and conduct of devils in their spite and opposition to every thing of God, through all the books of the Old Testament and the New, and remember and think, that such wili your temper be when you also shall be banished from the presence of God for your wilful rebellions, as the fallen angels are, and be forever shut out from all the blessings of his love, and all hope of his favour.

IV. A further spring of continued torment is 'such fixed and eternal hardness of heart as will never be softened, such impenitence and obstinacy of soul which will never relent or submit.' The hardest sinner here on earth may now and then feel a relenting moment, and the most daring Atheist may sometimes have a softening thought come across him, which may perhaps bring a tear into his eyes, and may form a good wish or two in his soul, and wring a groan from his heart which looks like repentance; but when we are dismissed from this body, and this state of trial and of hope, eternal hardness seizes upon the mind: the neck is like an iron sinew hardened more (if I may so express it) in the fire of hell. The will is fixed in everlasting obstinacy against God, and against the glories of his holiness. If Moses and the prophets, if Christ and his apostles in the ministry of the word, could not soften the heart of bold transgressors, what can be expected when all the means of grace and the methods of divine compassion are vanished and gone for ever?

It is granted indeed there will be bitter repentance among the damned in hell, and inward vexation of soul and self-cursing in abundance, for having plunged themselves into this misery, and having abandoned all the offers of divine mercy: but it will be only such a repentance as Judas the traitor felt, when 'he repented and hanged himself.' This is a sort of madness of rage within them for having made themselves miserable. But there will be found no hatred of the evil of sin, at it is an offence against God; no painful and relenting sense of their iniquity, as it has dishonored God and broken his law; no such sorrow for sin as is attended with an hearty aversion to it, and a desire to love God and obey him; but

rather they will feel and nourish a growing aversion to God and his holiness.

Ask yourselves, my young friends, did you never feel your hearts indulging an angry and unrelenting mood, and stubborn in your wrath against a superior who had sharply reproved you? Or have you never felt an obstinate and unreconcileable hour in your younger years, even against a parent who had severely corrected you? Or have you not found, at some seasons, your soul rising and kindling into violent resentment and a revengeful temper against your neighbour upon some supposed affront, damage, or mischief he had done you? Call these unhappy minutes to mind, and learn what *hell* is. Think into what a wretched case you would be plunged, if this wrath and stubbornness, this enmity and hardness should become immortal and unchangeable, though it were but against a neighbour. But if this obstinacy and stubborn hardness of soul were bent against God himself, so that you would never relent, never sincerely repent of your crimes, nor bow, nor melt, nor yield either to his majesty or his mercy, what would you think of yourselves and of your state? Would you not be wretched and horrible creatures indeed, without the least reason to hope for favour and compassion at his hands? Such is the case probably of every damned sinner. Amazing scene of complicated misery and rebellion! a guilty spirit which cannot repent! a rebellious spirit which cannot submit, even to God himself! a hardened soul that cannot bend nor yield to its Maker! Must not such a wretch be for ever the object of its own inward torment, as well as of divine punishment? O the hopeless and dreadful state of every bold transgressor, that is gone down to death without true repentance; for sincere and true repentance for having offended God, and ingenuous relentings of heart for sin are never found in those regions of future misery: no kindly meltings of soul toward God are ever known there.

V. There will be also 'intense sorrow and wild impatience at the loss of present comforts, without any recompence, and without any relief.' If this world, O sinful creature, with the riches, or the honours, or the pleasures of it be all thy chosen happiness, what universal grief and vexation will overspread all the powers of thy nature, when thou shalt be torn away from them all, even from

all thy happiness by death, and have nothing come in the room of them, nothing to relieve thy piercing grief, nothing to divert or amuse this vexation, nothing to soothe or ease this eternal pain at the heart.

And yet further, when thou shalt be as the Prophet speaks, 'like a wild bull in a net,' struggling and tossing to and fro to free thyself on all sides, when thou shalt be racked with inward fretfulness and impatience, and 'full of the fury of the Lord' that made thee, and the 'rebuke of that God' that punishes thee, Isai. li. 20, then shall thy heart, hard as it is in an obstinate course of sin, be ready to burst and break, not with penitence, but madness and overswelling sorrows: and yet it must not break nor dissolve, but will remain firm and hard forever to suffer these pangs. This is and must be an eternal head-ache, for there are no broken hearts in hell in any sense whatsoever. There the eyes are weeping, and the hands are wringing, and the tongue almost dried with long wailings and outcries, and the teeth gnashing with madness of thought: this is our Saviour's frequent representation of hell, 'there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth;' and yet the heart ever living and ever obstinate, to supply fresh springs of these sorrows, and to feel the anguish of them all.

VI. There will be also 'raging desires of ease and pleasure which shall never be satisfied, together with perpetual disappointment and endless confusion thrown upon all their schemes and their efforts of hope.' It is the nature of man, while it continues in being, that it must desire happiness, and make some efforts towards it: and some divines have supposed, that men of wicked sensuality and luxury in this world, have so drenched their souls in fleshly appetite by indulging their lusts, and placing their chief satisfaction and happiness therein, that they will carry this very temper of sensuality with them into the world of spirits; and it is possible their raging appetites to this sensual happiness, may be increased while there are no objects to gratify them. Now if this be the case, it must be intense and constant misery to feel eternal hunger with no bread to relieve it; keen desire of dainties with no luxurious dishes to please their humourous taste; eternal thirst without one drop of wine or water to allay or cool it; eternal fatigue and weariness without power to sleep, and eternal lust of pleasure without any hope of gratification.

But if we should suppose these sensualities die together with the body, yet this is certain, the soul will have everlasting appetites of its own, i. e. the general desire of ease and happiness, and of some satisfying good: but God, who is the only true source of happiness to spirits, the only satisfying portion of souls, is forever departed and gone; and thus the natural appetite of felicity will be ever wakeful and violent in damned spirits, while every attempt or hope to satisfy it will meet with perpetual disappointment.

Milton, our English poet, has represented this part of the misery of devils in a beautiful manner. He supposes, that ever since they tempted man to sin by the forbidden tree of knowledge, they are once a year changed into the form of serpents, and brought by millions into a grove of such trees, with the same golden appearance of fruit upon them: and while with eager appetite they seize those fair appearances to allay their thirst and hunger, instead of fruit they chew nothing but bitter ashes, and reject the hateful taste with spattering noise; and still they repeat their attempts with shameful disappointment, till they are vexed, are tormented, and torn with meagre famine, and then are permitted to resume the shape of devils again.* And why may we not suppose, that the crimes of which the wicked children of men have been guilty in the present life, may be punished with some such kind of pain and confusion, both of body and soul, as is here represented in this poetic emblem or parable?

VII. Another misery of damned creatures is, that 'vexing envy which arises against the saints in glory, and which shall never be appeased or gratified.' The blessed in heaven shall be forever blessed, and the envy of devils and damned souls shall never hurt their felicity, nor see their joys diminished. This vile passion of those cursed spirits therefore against the blessed inhabitants of heaven, though it rage never so high, is only preying upon their own hearts, and increasing their own inward anguish.

Let us imagine how many thousand holy souls are arrived safe at paradise, who were surrounded with mean and low circumstances here upon earth, while their haughty lords, and their rich insolent neighbours, have sinned

* See *Paradise Lost*, Book X. v. 504—584.—Ed.

themselves into hell: and do you think those children of pride can ever bear this sight without envy? How many martyrs have ascended to glory from racks, and tortures, and fires, here upon earth, while their bloody and cruel persecutors have been working out their own damnation by these inhuman acts of murder and cruelty? And will not these wretches, under their righteous sufferings and punishments in hell, envy the creatures whom they have scorned, and oppressed, and murdered here on earth, when they shall see them placed on high seats in the kingdom of heaven, and themselves cast into utter darkness?

And what does all this envy do but increase their own wretchedness? They are distracted with pride and rage, to think of these high favours of the blessed God bestowed on creatures whom they treated once with utmost disdain. But their envy, like a viper, preys upon their own entrails, and shall never be allayed or made easy. They send a thousand curses up to the heavenly world; but the saints are forever secured in happiness, under the eye of God their heavenly Father, and the care of Jesus their almighty Friend.

O what a painful plague must this envy be, when with all her envenomed whips and stings she does but scourge and torment the heart where she dwells? What an unspeakable torture must it be to feel this envy so violent and so constant, that it gives itself no ease through everlasting ages? Who, that dwells in flesh and blood, can conceive or express the horror and the twinging agonies that arise from such a hateful passion, fermenting and raging through all the powers of the soul?

VIII. The last thing I shall mention, as part of those punishments of hell which affect the spirit, is a 'perpetual expectation and dread of new and increasing punishments without end;' and it is highly probable, that this shall be the portion of multitudes. When the souls of the saints are released by death, and arrive at the blessed regions, they are not vested with all their brightest glories in a moment, nor fixed in the highest point of knowledge and happiness at their first entrance; but as their knowledge and their love increases, so their capacities are enlarged to take in new scenes and new degrees of pleasure, and it is probable that their felicities shall be ever increasing. And in the same manner, it is not unlikely, that the increasing

sins, the growing wickedness, and mad rebellion of damned spirits, may bring upon them new judgments and more weighty vengeance. So it was with Pharaoh the Egyptian tyrant, when he remained obstinate and rebellious against the messages of God by Moses, even while he and his nation lay under smarting scourges of the Almighty: how did his plagues increase with his iniquities? And he may be set before us as an emblem of sinners, and their sufferings, under the wrath of God in hell, as in Rom. ix. 17, 18.

Or perhaps as the wicked of this world when they die, have left evil and pernicious examples behind them, or have corrupted the morals of their neighbours by their enticements, or their commands, or by their wicked influence of any kind, so their punishment may be increased in proportion to the lasting effects of their vile example, or their vicious influences. And perhaps, too, there are none among all the ranks of the damned, whose souls will be filled so high with the dread and horror of increasing woes, as lewd and profane writers, profane and immoral princes, or cruel persecutors of religion. Jeroboam, the king, not only sinned himself grievously, but 'made Israel to sin,' as the scripture frequently expresses it with an emphasis, by setting up the idolatry of calves in the land, 1 Kings xiv, and xv, and xvi. His ghost stood fair for such an increase of torment from age to age, as his idolatry prevailed further in the land. And all the wanton poets and the vile persecutors, whether of heathen or of Christian name, whose writings, whose example, or whose laws have conveyed and propagated their wickedness from age to age after their decease, will be some of these wretched expectants of new and increasing punishment.

Have a care, O ye witty and ye mighty sinners! have a care of setting vile temptations and bad examples before the men of your age! have a care of spreading the contagion of your vices around you, by the softness and the force of your allurements! have a care of establishing iniquity by a law, and propagating loose and wicked opinions, or of encouraging persecution for conscience-sake! Take heed lest the cursed influence of your crimes should descend from generation to generation among the living, long after you are dead, and should call for new and sharper strokes from the punishing hand of the Almighty!

But suppose there were nothing else but the long dreadful view of the eternity of their present miseries, with an everlasting despair of ease or deliverance, this would add unspeakably to their torment: The constant sensation of what they feel now, and the dread of what they must feel, is sufficient to make their wretchedness intolerable.

If all these springs of misery, which I have already mentioned, are, and will be found in the souls of damned sinners, there is no need of more to make them exquisitely miserable: and yet, since their bodies shall be raised from the dust, in order to be joined with their souls in punishment, as they were united in sin, why may we not suppose, that the great God will create bodies for them of such an unhappy mould and contexture, as shall be another perpetual source of pain and anguish? What if their bodies shall be raised with all the seeds of disease in them, like the gout or the stone, or any more smarting malady? And what if the smart of these bodily distempers should mingle with the raging passions of the mind, as far as it is consistent with immortality and everlasting duration? Who can say, that when God exerts 'his power and makes his wrath known,' in punishing obstinate, rebellious, and impenitent sinners, as Rom. ix. he will not frame such bodies for them to dwell in, as shall be a hateful burden, and an incessant plague to them through all ages of their duration? And perhaps these bodily pains may be also included in the metaphor of a 'gnawing' worm bred within them, 'which shall never die,' which shall never cease to fill them with grievous anguish.

Here perhaps, it may be enquired, are there not multitudes of men in this world, who are not sinners of the grosser kind, but have lived, in the main, in the practice of the common social duties, and have maintained the usual forms of religion, according to the outward rules of the gospel, and the custom of their nation, but they have been negligent indeed of any sincere repentance towards God, and have been strangers to inward vital religion throughout their whole course? Shall these creatures, who seem to stand in a sort of indifferent character, who are outwardly blameless, with regard to common morality, and have exercised the common virtues of justice and benevolence towards their fellow-creatures, perhaps under the influences of education or custom, or perhaps by

the effect that reason or philosophy, or other inward fears, have had toward the restraint of their passions and appetites ; I say, shall such sort of creatures as these be filled with those furies of rage and resentment against God, envy and malice toward their fellow-sinners, and all the vile and unsociable passions in these regions of misery, which they have never found working in them here on earth, or but in a low degree ?' Shall all the torments and inward anguish of soul that you have been describing, fall upon this rank of sinners, whom the eye of the world could hardly distinguish from good men, and who were very far from the character of wicked ?

I 'answer,' 1st, that however there may seem to be three sorts of persons in our esteem, viz. the good, the bad, and the indifferent, yet the word of God seems to acknowledge but two sorts, viz. 'Those who fear God and serve him, and those who fear him not,' Mal. iii. 18, those who have acted from principles of inward religion, or the love of God, and those who had no such principle within them ; and therefore the scripture reveals and declares but two sorts of states in the future world, viz. that of 'rewards and punishments,' or that of 'happiness and misery :' and, as God the righteous Judge is intimately acquainted with all the secret principles and workings of every heart, he alone knows who have practised virtue sincerely from pious principles, and who have had no such principles within them. He well distinguishes who they are that have complied with the rules of the dispensation under which they have lived, or who have not complied with it: and such as may have the good esteem of men may be highly offensive to God, who knows all things, and may be worthy of his final punishment. 'The Judge of the whole earth will do right.'*

* It has been the opinion of some writers in older and in later times, that the vast numbers of indifferent persons who have neither been evidently holy nor evidently wicked, shall be sent to a new state of trial in the other world; but I can find nothing of this doctrine in the Bible, nor any hint of it, unless in that obscure text of St. Peter, 1 Epist. ch. iii. 19, where Christ is said 'to go and preach to the spirits' of those sinners who were drowned in the flood of *Noah*, which may be construed to another sense with truth and justice.—Watts.

The true sense of this passage is clearly given by Henry, Scott, Doddridge, Clarke, and other commentators, which the reader can consult at his convenience. I shall here subjoin Macnight's view of the passage, in which he

And since he has declared it to be his rule of judgment, that he will reward every one according to their works, and it shall be much more tolerable for some of those creatures than it shall be for others, by reason of their lesser crimes, or their nearer approaches to virtue and piety, so it is certain he will act in perfect justice and equity towards every criminal, and none shall be punished above their demerits, though no impenitent sinner shall go unpunished.

We do not, therefore, imagine, that every condemned criminal shall have the same degree of inward raging passions, the same madness and fury against God and their fellow-creatures, nor the same anguish of conscience as those who have been more grossly and obstinately wicked and vicious, and have wilfully refused and renounced the well known offers of grace and salvation. There are innumerable degrees of inward punishment and pain, according to the degrees of sin.

Answ. 2. It should be added too, that that world of punishment is also a world of increasing wickedness, and those that have had some natural virtues, and some appearances of goodness here, may and will renounce it all in the world to come, where they find themselves punished for their impenitence and irreligion, and their criminal neglect of God and godliness: and the least and the lightest of the punishments of damned souls will be terrible enough,

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briefly and clearly expresses the opinion common to the great body of protestant divines and expositors.—"Christ is said, by the same Spirit who made him alive, to have preached to the antediluvians, because his Spirit inspired Noah to preach to them, as is plain from Gen. vi. 3. 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.' Hence Noah is called 'a preacher of righteousness,' 2 Pet. ii. 5. By attributing the preaching of the ancient prophets to Christ, the apostle hath taught us, that from the beginning the economy of man's redemption hath been under the direction of Christ. Accordingly the same apostle hath expressly affirmed, 1 Pet. i. 11. that the Spirit who was in the ancient prophets was the Spirit of Christ. . . . . Eph. ii. 15—17. 'Having abolished,' &c. 'and came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them who were nigh.' [Now] it is certain, that our Lord, after his resurrection, did not go personally to the Gentiles to preach peace to them: he preached to them by his apostles only. But if Christ is said by Paul to go and do, what he did by his apostles, he may with equal propriety be said by Peter, to go and do what he did by his prophet Noah. . . . . [The antediluvians] were men on earth in the flesh when Christ preached to them by his Spirit speaking in Noah; but they are now 'spirits in prison,' detained like the fallen angels, (Jude 6,) 'unto the judgment of the great day.'—Ed.

and yet not surpass the desert of their offences. They have been all in greater or less degrees, treasuring up food for this immortal worm, and fuel for this fire, which is unquenchable.

Besides, it may be added here, that in threatenings the Holy Scripture generally expresses them in their highest degrees, and most formidable appearances, on purpose to secure men from coming near the peril and border of them.

This shall suffice to explain the first part of the metaphor in my text, i. e. 'The worm that dieth not.'

§ II. *The fire shall not be quenched.*

I proceed now to consider the second part of the description of hell in the nature of it, as it is represented by our Saviour, and that is, that 'the fire is never quenched.'

Fire signifies the medium or instrument of torture from without, which God has threatened to employ in the punishment of guilty creatures, even as the gnawing worm signifies their inward torment. Fire applied to the sensible and tender parts of the flesh, gives the sharpest pain of any thing that comes within our common notice, and it is used in scripture to signify the punishments of damned sinners, and the wrath of God in the world to come. And perhaps that text is the foundation of it, Isa. xxx. last verse, 'Tophet is ordained of old, he has made it deep and large, the pile thereof is fire and much wood, and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.' This Tophet was a place in the valley of Hinnom, where children were wont to be burnt in sacrifice to the idol Moloch; and from these Hebrew words, hell in the New Testament is called Geenna, because of the burning torture and the terrible shrieks of dying children in the valley of Hinnom.

This description of Hell by fire is used by our Saviour and his Apostles, in their speeches and writings on this subject. Hell-fire is mentioned six times in six verses where my text lies; the last sentence of judgment passed upon sinners, as it is represented by our Saviour, is expressed in the same language, Matt. xxv, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.' The Apostle Paul, speaking of the return of Christ, 2 Thess. i. 8, asserts that 'he shall appear in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel:' and in Rev. xiv. 10, 11, as well as in other parts of this book, the final pun-

ishment of sinners is represented by 'fire and brimstone,' as the instruments of their torment.

It is true indeed, spirits or beings which have no body cannot feel burning by material fire, unless they are united to some sort of material vehicles; but that God will use material fire, to punish obstinate and rebellious sinners hereafter at the resurrection, is not improbable, though it is very hard to say with full assurance. Since the bodies of the wicked are to be raised again, it is not at all unlikely that their habitation shall be a place of fire, and their bodies may be made immortal to endure the smart and torture without consuming. Did not this God, by his almighty power and mercy, preserve the bodies of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, in the burning furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, so that the fire had no power to consume or destroy them? and cannot his power do the same thing under the influence of his justice as well as of his mercy? May they not be maintained forever in their existence to endure the appointed and deserved vengeance? If the blessed God has 'with much long-suffering borne with these vessels of wrath,' under their repeated oppositions to his law and gospel, and they still go on in their vice, obstinacy and impenitence, and have 'fitted themselves for destruction,' surely he will 'make his wrath and power known' in their punishment, as St. Paul expresses it, Rom. ix, and when the power and wrath of God unite to punish a creature, how miserable must that creature be?

It is certain, that God has been pleased in his word frequently to make use of *fire*, *brimstone*, *burning*, *smoke*, *darkness*, and *chains*, and every thing that is painful and noisome to nature on earth, in order to represent the miseries that he has prepared for sinners in hell: and we must suppose that all these metaphors, if they are but mere metaphors, carry with them a sense of most intense pain and anguish with which God will afflict the bodies, as well as the spirits of those guilty creatures, who have rebelled against his majesty, rejected his mercy, and exposed themselves to his indignation. But what particular instruments and methods of punishment. what other elements or means of torture the great God will make use of to execute his sentence in this tremendous work, is more than we can now declare, because God has not fully declared it. And I pray God none of us may be ever

doomed to learn it by terrible experience. But if there be nothing but *fire*, the anguish will be intolerable, as one of our poets expresses it,

> In liquid burnings, or on dry, to dwell,
> Is all the sad variety of hell.

Or what if the Almighty, who has all nature, with all its powers, at his command, should employ other material instruments for the execution of his deserved wrath? What if he should choose the alternate extremes of fire and frost, as some have imagined, to torment those impenitent criminals? Or what if the creatures which they have abused to their impious and brutish purposes, should be made instruments and mediums of their punishment? Wine may be rendered a frequent means of sickness, agony and pain to the drunkard, and meat and other dainties to the glutton, and gold to the covetous wretches who made gold their god, that they may all remember their crimes and their sufferings. The wisdom of God will execute the sentence of his justice in the most honourable manner.

And after all, if we call away our thoughts from fire, and every material instrument of pain, which the great God may employ in punishing obstinate rebels, and survey only those acute and dreadful impressions of horror and anguish, which a just and holy God may make on sinful spirits in an immediate manner in hell, this would overwhelm our souls with insupportable agonies. 'Who knows the power of thine anger? For according to thy fear, so is thy wrath,' says Moses, Psal. xc. Our fears do not rise above those evils which the wrath of God will inflict. Who knows what are those arrows of the Almighty, of which Job speaks, 'the poison whereof drank up his spirits, and those terrors of God which set themselves in array against him?' Who knows what our Saviour felt in the hour of his agony and atonement for our sins, which made him sweat drops of blood? And what sort of terrible impressions God himself may make of his own wrath and vengeance, on the heart of such criminals as wilfully reject his salvation, is beyond our thoughts to conceive, or our language to express.

This much shall suffice concerning the metaphor of fire, and the hand of God himself in kindling this fire for the execution of his sentence against impenitents. But since

I have entered so far into this subject, I cannot think it proper entirely to finish it, without giving notice of some different and dreadful additions to their torment which will arise from evil angels, and from their companions in sin and misery among the children of men: for in the agonies of our Saviour, men and devils joined together to afflict him, when it 'pleased the Father to bruise him, and to make his soul an offering for our sins.'

I. 'Evil angels, wicked and unclean spirits, with all their furious dispositions and active powers, will increase the misery of the damned.' They paved the way to hell for man by the first temptation of our parents in paradise, and they have been ever since busy in tempting the children of men to sin, and they will be hereafter as busy in giving them torment. When these wicked spirits, O sinner, who have taken thee as a willing captive by their baits and devices in this world, have led thee down through the paths of vice to the regions of sorrow, they will begin then to insult thee with hateful reproaches, and to triumph over thee with insolence and scorn. When they have deceived thee on earth, to thy own perdition, they will make thee the object of their bitter ridicule and mockery in hell.

O could we turn aside the veil of the invisible world, and hold the bottomless pit open before you, what bitter groans of ghosts would you hear, not only oppressed and agonizing under the wrath of a righteous God, but also under the insults of cruel devils? As 'there is joy among the angels of heaven when a sinner repents,' or when a soul arrives safely at those blessed mansions; so when a rebellious and obstinate criminal is sent down to hell, you would hear the triumphs of those malicious spirits over him, with the voice of insulting pride, and hellish joy. And while they domineer over you, and tear you as roaring lions, who seek and tear their prey, you will curse yourselves a thousand times for hearkening to their deceitful allurements. You will vent your rage against yourselves at the same time that they scoff at you as eternal fools, who have lost a God, and a heaven, and immortal happiness, by your own madness and folly in hearkening to their temptations.

II. 'The mutual upbraidings of fellow-sinners and fellow-sufferers among the children of men, will aggravate

your wretchedness day and night without end.' Those who drew each other into foul iniquities, shall fill the ears of each other with loud and sharp reproaches for their mutual influence on both their ruin, and shall charge their damnation, and all their heavy sorrows, as a heavy load on each other's souls. Some of those who have been joined in the nearest ties of kindred and friendship, while they dwelt in flesh and blood, shall be the terrible instruments of their keenest remorse and vexation, and teaze their spirits with endless upbraidings.

Here the 'sons of pride,' that most hateful iniquity, shall be overwhelmed, with huge mortification and disdain. The mighty sinner shall be insulted by the meanest of the crowd, and princes shall be bearded and affronted by those gay slaves of the court, whom they once employed in flattering and adoring them. They were once vain enough to believe, that they were something more than mortal; but now they are spurned by those very flatterers with a foot of contempt, and their eternal pride still swelling, gives their own hearts new stings and twinges at every resentment. None but a proud and haughty creature here in this world, who has sometimes met with scorn and insult from his inferiors, can speak feelingly of the exquisite sensibility of these torments of a soul in hell.

But besides this, there are many sinners who lived in malice, and who died with their hearts full of revenge against their fellow-sinners; and when they shall meet them in those deplorable regions, how natural is it to suppose they will endeavour to execute this revenge upon them without end and without mercy? For it may be easily supposed, that malice, revenge, and cruelty, which are the proper character of devils, shall not be abated among the children of men, when they are grown so near akin in their tempers to those evil spirits, and are now forever mingled amongst them.

And yet further, who knows what the damned in hell shall endure from the endless brawls and bitter quarrels among themselves? What new contentions will arise perpetually in such a country, where it is perhaps the practice and custom of the place, and the nature of the inhabitants, for the most part, to make every one of their fellows as uneasy and as miserable as they can? O what mad and furious pride, and malice, and every hellish pas-

sion, will be raging almost in every bosom against all those who are near them, and this in a dark prison where all are intensely tormented, and where there is no such thing as compassion or sincere love, nothing to sooth each other's sorrows, but every thing that may add to the smart and anguish!

O that the present survey of these horrors of soul, these complicated distresses and miseries from within us and without us, from every quarter of heaven and hell, from the 'gnawing worm' within us, and from the 'fire' of the wrath of God, and the mutual insults, railings and injuries of men and devils, might all lie with its due weight upon our spirits now, while we are in the land of hope; that every one of us may be awakened to a timely concern about our highest interest, and hasten to make our escape as Lot did from Sodom, lest the sentence of death be pronounced upon us while we delay, and the fiery deluge overtake us.

But here I would tarry a little to answer a repeated objection, viz. the terror of this outward punishment from the hand of God, which is described by 'avenging fire,' is so severe and intolerable, that it awakens some lesser criminals to raise the same cavil against this 'unquenchable fire,' or God's punishing hand, as was raised before against the 'never-dying worm,' or the inward anguish of soul arising from its own conscience.

It is possible some lesser sinner, who has had more appearances of piety or religion here on earth, may rise and say, you have set the punishments of sin in a most horrible and tremendous light, from this metaphor of 'fire,' as well as from the deathless 'worm:' but surely this cannot be the case, nor these the sufferings which God will inflict on every wretched creature in hell. Are not the punishments there proportioned to the offences? What if these sharpest and deepest tortures and horrors should be the portion of the vilest criminals, the most impious rebels against God, the profane and obstinate abusers of grace, the scoffers at Christ and his gospel, and the cruel persecutors of all the saints, yet will every soul who had not quite religion and holiness enough to reach heaven, be thus terribly tormented in hell? Does not Christ himself tell us, and did you not allow before, that it shall be more tolerable for some sinners than for others? And will there

be no easier abodes, no milder regions, no kinder and more favourable appointments for such as have many good wishes and hopes, many friendly exercises of virtue towards men, and some workings of imperfect piety toward God?

To this I answer, as before, it is certain that 'every one shall be judged according to their works,' by an unerring rule of equity, and shall be punished according to the aggravation of their iniquities. But dost thou know, O sinner, how great is that punishment which the least transgression against the law of God deserves? One single sin, which thou wilt not part with, will create insufferable misery. And though there may be other criminals there of much more heinous and aggravated guilt, profaneness, and rebellion than thine is, yet if thy soul be filled with all that torment which one sin may create and deserve, there will be hell enough around thee to make thy distress too terrible for thee to bear.

Besides, let it be remembered, that whatsoever tendencies toward piety, or appearances of goodness, might be found with thee in this world, all these will vanish and be lost, when once thy day of grace is finished, and all the means of grace and salvation are ended forever. If thou hast refused the proposals of mercy, and continued in thy sins without repentance, and hast never accepted the salvation of Christ while it was offered, all the good 'that thou seemedst to have shall be taken from thee,' Matt. xxv. 29, or rather thy heart itself will grow more hard, thy will more obstinate against God, and every evil passion will rise and prevail, and make thee perhaps as very a devil as thy companions in guilt and misery. It is for those who would not part with their beloved sins, which were as dear as 'right hands,' or as 'right eyes,' that the 'never-dying worm' and the 'unquenchable fire' are prepared, as the context itself informs us in this place.

And as the worm of conscience, even for lesser sins, will gnaw thy heart with intense anguish, so the vengeance of divine fire will torment thee with exquisite pain, though thy pain and thy anguish shall not be equal to what greater criminals endure. But it is wise and kind in the blessed God to denounce the terrors and sanctions of his law in their utmost severity, to guard his law the better against every transgression, and to frighten and secure his creatures from sin and punishment.

Trifle not, therefore, O sinner, with the means of mercy, and venture not upon little sins, in hope of little misery, nor dare to continue in an impenitent state without God, without Christ and his salvation, upon a foolish presumption that thy sins are but small, and thy punishment shall be less than others: for the least of those sorrows will be found greater than any mortal creature can bear, and therefore thou shalt be made immortal to suffer them.

It is granted, there are many mansions in hell, as well as in heaven, but, as the lowest mansion in heaven is happiness, so the easiest place in hell is misery.

There is another objection arises here, which it is necessary to give some answer to; viz. if the punishments of hell are so intense and terrible, between the worm of conscience, the fire of God's anger, and the malice of evil spirits, surely it will work up human nature into extacy and madness; it will take away all the regular exercise of our natural powers; it will render us perhaps mere passive miserable beings, of keen sensations without reasoning. This is certain, that such and so various tortures would have that influence upon our natures at present, and why should it not hereafter? And will the blessed God continue to punish creatures when their reason is lost? What can punishments avail?

I answer, surely God will not continue to punish madmen; therefore none of these torments shall extinguish our reason, or destroy our intellectual powers; for it is as creatures of reason and free-will that sinners are thus punished, and therefore these powers must remain in their proper exercise; besides, the very operation of these powers in self-condemnation, and self-upbraiding, are part of their punishment. But whether God will so fortify the natures of the damned, which probably shall not be made of flesh and blood, and enable them to bear such intense pain without distraction, or whether the highest extremes of their torment shall only be inflicted at some certain periods or intervals, so that they shall soon return to their reasoning powers again, with bitter remembrance of what passed, this matter is hard to determine; and because it is unwritten and unrevealed, I am silent. But it still remains, that punishment shall be so intense and severe, as becomes a God of holiness and justice to inflict on rebellious and obstinate creatures.

§ III. *Reflections on the nature of these punishments.*

It is time now that we should proceed to form some special 'reflections on the nature of the punishments of hell,' such as they have been described in the foregoing discourse.

The first is this; 'what dreadful and unknown evil is contained in the nature of sin which grows up into such misery,' which breeds this stinging worm in the conscience, which prepares the creature for such fiery torments, and which provokes God to inflict them? The 'vessels of wrath have prepared themselves' for it, as the Apostle intimates, by their own sins, Rom. ix. 22, 'they are fitted for destruction:' nor does all the intense and infinite anguish of this punishment exceed the desert of our sins. The great God, in a way of bounty, may often bestow upon us vastly beyond what our little services can ever pretend to have deserved, but he never punishes beyond our deserts.

What a dangerous and pernicious mistake is it in the children of men to sport with sin, as with a harmless thing? It is much safer sporting with a poisonous serpent, or with burning firebrands. The serpent has many gay and pleasing colours on its skin, and appears a very charming creature, which tempts children and fools to play with it: and the same ignorance inclines them sometimes to sport with fire, because of its shining brightness: and till they are burnt with the fire, or bit by the serpent, they will not forsake their foolish choice, nor be convinced of their danger. Such is the case and temper of sinful mortals: their senses indulge the pleasing flatteries of sin, and are fond of its tempting amusements, till they feel the smart of the fire raging in their bosoms, and the adder stings them to death. Thus the wise man describes the flatteries of wine in the view of the drunkard, Prov. xxiii. 31, 32: but the same wise man pronounces every one 'a fool that makes a mock at sin,' or trifles with so formidable a mischief, Prov. xiv. 9.

How vain are the gay fancies of sinful men in the hour of temptation, and how shocking and dreadful will be their disappointment? They think the descriptions of sin, which are blown up and kindled into such terror by the lips of the preacher, are but as mock-fire which never

burns; but the great day of vengeance, which makes haste towards them, will terribly and eternally convince them of the fatal mischief of it by the various plagues that shall seize upon them. The living worm shall gnaw their consciences, and the fire of God will torment their spirits, and spread a raging anguish through their whole natures; and every twinging accent of their pain shall teach them, but with a terrible and hopeless conviction, 'what unspeakable evil is contained in sin.' They will then find what 'a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God,' who has a right, and power to punish, and who will punish, Heb. x. 31.

O that each of us might arrive at this holy wisdom, to learn the dreadful 'evil of sin' from this Bible, this book of the divine law and grace, and not provoke the blessed God to teach us so necessary a lesson by the rod of his vengeance! O that we could look upon every unlawful action, and particularly every sin against conscience, as the seed of that worm which will gnaw our souls in hell with intense pain, as part of that fuel which is kindling into a flame to torment our consciences forever, and that under the powerful influences of these representations of sin we might flee to the utmost distance from it with horror, and make our safe escape!

Reflect. II. If the punishments of hell, appointed by the blessed God, carry so much terror in them, 'how much mistaken are the sinful children of men in the ideas which they form of the great and blessed God? This representation of the vengeance of the Lord in hell may be of use to refute such mistaken opinions.

Some have framed a God for themselves; not such as dwells in the heavens, not such as he has described himself in his word; but their vain imagination has raised up an idol made of mere goodness and mercy, without holiness and justice. It is their own self-love which forms this idle and foolish image of the God that made them, because they do not like to think of falling under the terrors of his power. They venture to affront him to his face, they dare him to vengeance; and as the writer of the book of Job expresses it, 'they stretch out their hands against God, they strengthen themselves against the Almighty, they run upon him with insolence, and venture upon the thick bosses of his buckler,' Job xv. 25. There are multitudes

in our day that are arrived at such a dreadful height of impiety, as to call upon him for the damnation of themselves, as well as of their friends, in sport and merriment. They will not believe that the blessed God will ever be found so severe and formidable as preachers describe him; and 'because judgment is not speedily executed' against the men of iniquity, 'therefore the sons of men have their hearts set in them to do mischief. Madness is in their hearts,' Eccles. viii. 11, and ix. 3. Because God delays his indignation they will not believe he has any belonging to him, notwithstanding all the terrible words by which he is represented by the prophets, the apostles, and the Son of God himself. And while they rush boldly on those crimes which God has severely forbidden, they are ready to think 'God is just such an one as themselves,' regardless of virtue and government, Psal. l. 21 : and because they make nothing of sin, they imagine God will make nothing of it.

O that the sons of men would once learn to know God better, for 'there are many who have not the true knowledge of God, I speak it to their shame, when they' fancy he is all made up of gentleness and forbearance, without holiness and justice! Alas, sirs, these attributes are as necessary in God as grace and compassion. He is and he must be a wise, a righteous governor of the world ; and his wisdom requires that impenitent sinners should be punished, to secure the honour of his law, and to guard his gospel from contempt.* These awful perfections of the blessed God are as necessary to vindicate his authority and his government from insult and rebellion, as his goodness is needful to encourage sinful creatures to repent and return to their duty. The word of God expressly tells us, he is a God of 'holiness and a consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29 ; but there is many a sinner that will never learn

* A governor made up of mere goodness and mercy, could be no governor at all; for it is absurd to call that a government, where every subject may do what iniquity and mischief he pleases with impunity. The laws of such a government would cease to be laws, and become mere rules and directions for living, which every one might observe or not, just according to his inclination. To say that it became the wisdom of God to threaten offenders, but that his goodness will interpose in the end and hinder the punishment, is to say, that God is not wise; for if he were, he would certainly have taken care not to let those men into the secret. Bishop Hort's sermons, p. 315.

this lesson till the torments of hell teach it him by dismal experience. They have trifled with his majesty, and mocked at his threatenings all their life, till at the moment of death he awakes like a lion, and tears their spirits with everlasting anguish.

I might take notice also in this place, that there is another mistaken notion of God, into which some persons have unhappily fallen, as 'though God were the cause and author of sin,' and have spoken unadvisedly with their lips, in such language as borders too near upon blasphemy. But it is evident, that a God, who will punish the sins of men with such intense pain and torment, can never be so inconsistent with himself as to be the author or cause of those sins. It is granted, that his universal providence has a concern in every thing that is transacted among men, but since he has informed us in what a dreadful manner he will execute his vengeance against sinners in the world to come, it is insolence and indignity against the blessed God to represent him as introducing sin into our world. 'Let God be true, though every man be a liar;' let God be pure, and righteous, and holy, though every man be found guilty and criminal: 'otherwise, how shall God judge the world?' How can he inflict such torments on rebellious creatures, if he constrain or influence them to practise this rebellion? All opinions therefore, that allow of such an inference, as though 'God were the author of sin,' must be pronounced false and pernicious to men, as well as injurious to the justice of God; for these notions throw a vile imputation on the blessed God, and charge him with heinous insincerity, to forbid the commission of sin by all these terrors, and yet suppose him to influence men to the practice of them.

Reflect. III. 'How reasonable is it for us to believe, that such a hell, as I have described, is prepared for impenitent sinners, since there are so many appearances of the beginnings of it here on earth,' so many indications, and signs, and forerunners of such misery and torment inflicted on sinful men. Survey the remarkable executions of God's judgments on the world in several ages and nations; look back to our first parents, who were thrust out of paradise, the garden of pleasure, and banished from the gates of it forever, upon the account of the first sin, and the entrance of it was guarded by a flaming sword to forbid their return.

Behold the flood of watery vengeance in the days of Noah breaking up from the vast caverns of the earth, and pouring down from the windows of heaven to punish sin. 'Deep calls unto deep' in the tremendous noise of these water-spouts, which spread death and desolation over the face of the whole earth, 'because all flesh had sinned' against God their Creator. Turn your eyes to Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain, 'suffering the vengeance' of heaven with lightning and devouring fire bursting from the clouds to punish the unnatural crimes of that country. See the fiery flying serpents, as the messengers of divine anger, to punish the rebellion of the Israelites, in the wilderness. Mark what multitudes in the camp of Israel received their mortal sting, and were given up to destruction and death. Cast your eyes abroad over the nations, and what records have we of all former ages, which do not manifest the vengeance of God pursuing the iniquities of men, by wars, and famines, and pestilences, and every thing that is bitter and dreadful to human nature. See Jerusalem, the city of God, all in flames, and the whole land of Judea laid desolate with deepest distress, diffused and reigning among all the inhabitants of it. Above a million of them were actually slaughtered and consumed by famine and sword, as a sacrifice to the anger of God. for their long provocations, and the cruel barbarous murder of his Son Jesus. And when you have taken all these surveys, then tell me if such terrors of the Lord do not give us sufficient warning what unknown agonies and destructions may be expected by obstinate and impenitent sinners from the hand of God, when the utmost limits of his patience restrain his wrath no longer, but his wisdom gives a loose to all his fiery indignation.

To inforce this yet upon your hearts, think again of all the pains and torments of flesh and spirit, which arise from the distempers of body, and from the anguish of soul, even in this present state of trial, this land of hope, this season of divine long-suffering. Go to the hospitals, where the gout, and stone, and rheumatism, and a thousand maladies torture the nerves and the joints of men with intolerable smart; and infer thence what God will inflict both on the flesh and spirit, or the soul and body of sinners in the day of his complete vengeance, when his offers of mercy and the years of his grace are come to

their last period. Go and survey the fields of battle and slaughter, where thousands of the dead and the dying are mingled in confused heaps, and groan out their souls in long anguish and extreme torture, with bruises and wounds and all the smarting effects of the instruments of war. Now if all these things come under the conduct of divine providence in a sinful world, which is yet in a way of nope, what may those resolved and obstinate rebels expect, when all the doors of hope are shut up forever, and providence has nothing to do on earth or in hell, but to execute the vengeance of God.

Shall we take one step yet further, and think of the inward pangs of conscience, which some awakened criminals have felt in this life on the account of sin, when the arrows of God have been shot into their souls, and the poison thereof lies drinking up their spirits? Think what dreadful ferments of passion, and rage, and hatred of God have been found in the hearts of some sinful creatures, when they have grown mad with revenge against God, and against themselves, and envy against all their fellow-mortals, who are not in the same circumstances; think yet again how terribly their misery must be aggravated, when the torture of everlasting despair attends all the rest of the pains and sorrows they suffer; and then say, if the description of a future hell in the word of God may not be true and real. What anguish beyond all the power of present thought and language, may seize all the powers of wilful and impious rebels against the authority and the mercy of God, when all the stores of his vengeance that have been treasuring up for many years, shall be poured out upon them without any mitigation or mixture of mercy.

Reflect. IV. 'It is matter of surprise, and great astonishment, that thousands and ten thousands of the sinful children of men, from day to day, and from year to year, are walking on the borders of all this misery, and yet are so thoughtless and unconcerned about it.' They carry peaceful and easy minds in the midst of this dreadful danger, and while they have all the symptoms of the children of wrath upon them, they live without fear, and make no effort toward their escape. Wretched creatures indeed! Who have a mortal disease upon them that will breed this growing worm of conscience, that will grow up into all this anguish and distress, and yet are senseless

of their own peril, unacquainted with their own state of soul, and are daily treading their earthly rounds of business and of pleasure with a merry heart. All the heavy artillery of divine vengeance is ready to be discharged upon them as soon as the door of death opens and lets them into the invisible world; and yet they walk on fearless and joyful, and have no guard or defence from all this misery, besides their own vain presumption. Stupid creatures, to lie down at night, and awake in the morning within an inch of hell, and yet secure and fearless! They live 'without God in the world,' and that even in this land of light and hope, where he offers to visit them with all his graces; and yet they are hasting hourly to the eternal world, where they must meet and behold him in all his terrors.

Will nothing awaken you, O ye obstinate transgressors against God, ye obstinate rejecters of his grace and gospel? Will nothing warn you to flee from the wrath to come? But just thus it was in the days of Noah; the sinners of that generation would not hearken to that preacher of righteousness; and even when they saw the clouds of heaven grow big and black over their heads, and the rain began to be poured down from the skies, little did they imagine that it would have drowned the earth, till they were overwhelmed with the rising destruction. And so shall it be in the days of the Son of man, when all the warnings of the preachers have been despised, and the threatened vengeance of the book of God derided, when they have set up for bold and witty scoffers, and impudently demanded, 'where is the promise of his coming?' Then shall the great and terrible day of the Lord come, and pour out upon them the full measure of wrath and indignation.

Is it not time, my friends, to bethink yourselves, whether this be your case? Is it not time for every one of us to examine our souls? Am I exposed to this danger? Am I every moment on the brink of this misery, and yet content to continue so one night or one day longer? Can I ever hope to escape the fury of God, while I thus abuse his patience? Or can I have any expectation of living with him as my God hereafter, if I never seek after him here? The face of God, as a stranger in the world to come, carries infinite terrors in it, and yet we are content to be strangers to him, and to live without his acquaintance. 'The wrath of God abides upon' every man who is unregen-

erate in this life, and 'who has not trusted in the name of the Son of God,' John iii. 36 ; yet they are thoughtless of it, for they feel it not; but the moment when they shall awake in the world of spirits, that wrath will be felt with sudden and dreadful anguish, as a most unsupportable bur then, and will crush all the powers of the soul into torment.

Reflect. V. 'It deserves and it demands our highest gratitude to the great God, our humblest acknowledgements and our most exalted praises to his majesty and his mercy, that we, who have long ago deserved this misery, are not yet plunged into the midst of it:' that we have not been entirely cut off from the land of hope, and sent down to this destruction. Blessed be the name and the grace of our God for ever and ever.

While there are thousands who have been sent down to the place of punishment, whence there is no redemption, before they had continued so long in sin as many of us have done, what a peculiar instance is it of divine long-suffering and goodness, that we are not actually put under the sting of this living worm, under this fiery vengeance from the hand of God? What was there in us that should secure us from this destruction, while we continued in our state of guilt, rebellion and impenitence? Have we not seen many sinners on our right hand, and on our left, cut off in their sins, and to all appearance they seem to be sent down to the place of sorrows? What is it but the special mercy and distinguishing favour of God that has dealt thus kindly with us, and spared and saved us, week after week, and month after month, while we continued in our iniquities, and has given us space for repentance and hope? What shall we render to the Lord for all his patience and long-suffering, even to this day? How often have we incurred the penalty of the law of God, and the fiery sentence of condemnation by our repeated iniquities, both against the authority and the grace of God? And yet we are alive in his presence, and are hearing the words of hope and salvation. O let us look back and shudder at the thoughts of that dreadful precipice, on the edge of which we have so long wandered. Let us flee for escape to the refuge that is set before us, and give a thousand glories to the divine mercy that we are not plunged into this perdition.

Reflect. VI. Let us learn from this description of hell,

and our imminent danger of it, 'the infinite value and worth of the gospel of Christ:' this gospel, which calls us aloud to flee from the wrath to come, and points out to us the only effectual way to escape it. What can all the riches of the Indies do to relieve us under the guilt and distress into which sin has brought us? What can the favour of princes, and the flattering honours of the world do to rescue us from this danger? What can the highest gust of sensuality, and the most exquisite delights of flesh and blood do to secure us against this overwhelming misery? It is only the gospel of the blessed Jesus which is our refuge, and our safety from the tremendous destruction.

What are the heights, and depths, and lengths of human science, with all the boasted acquisitions of the brightest genius of mankind? Learning and science can measure the globe, can sound the depths of the sea, can compass the heavens, can mete out the distances of the sun and moon, and mark out the path of every twinkling star for many ages past, or ages to come: but they cannot acquaint us with the way of salvation from this long, this endless distress. What are all the sublime reasonings of philosophers upon the abstruse and most difficult subjects? What is the whole circle of sciences which human wit and thought can trace out and comprehend? Can they deliver us from the guilt of one sin? Can they free us from one of the terrors of the Almighty? Can they assuage the torment of a wounded spirit, or guard us from the impressions of divine indignation? Alas! they are all but trifles, in comparison of this blessed gospel, which saves us from eternal anguish and death.

It is the gospel that teaches us the holy skill to prevent this worm of conscience from gnawing the soul, and instructs us how to kill it in the seed and first springs of it, to mortify the corruptions of the heart, to resist the temptations of Satan, and where to wash away the guilt of sin. It is this blessed gospel that clearly discovers to us how we may guard against the fire of divine wrath, or rather how to secure our souls from becoming the fuel of it. It is this book that teaches us to sprinkle the blood of Christ on a guilty conscience by faith, i. e. by receiving him as sincere penitents, and thereby defends us from the angel of death and destruction. This is that experimental philosophy of the saints in heaven, whereby they have been re-

leased from the bonds of their sins, have been rescued from the curse of the law, and been secured from the gnawing worm and the devouring fire.

A serious meditation of hell in its exquisite pain and sorrow, will enhance our value of the salvation of Christ, and will exalt our esteem and honour of the love of God, who has delivered us from eternal death. If we will but appoint our thoughts to dwell a little on the terrors and vengeance from which the blessed Jesus has rescued us by his glorious undertaking, if we will stretch the powers of our souls, and survey the lengths, and the breadths, and the depths of this distress and misery, which we have deserved, this will discover to us the heights, and the depths, and the lengths of his love, who submitted himself to the curses of the law of God, 'and was made a curse for us,' that he might redeem us to the possession of an eternal blessing, Gal. iii. 23. This will shew us what exceeding riches of the grace of God have been laid out upon us for our salvation. This will spread before us the unmeasurable love of Jesus, which has brought him down from the bosom of his Father into such agonies as he sustained in the garden, and on the cross, that he might rescue us from the wrath to come. O what immense and endless debts of gratitude and love are due from every ransomed sinner, who has been released from the bonds of his guilt, and from all this wretchedness, by the love of God the Father, and the grace of his Son Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and honour, and most exalted praise, forever and ever. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE XIII.

THE ETERNAL DURATION OF THE PUNISHMENTS IN HELL.

MARK. ix. 46. Where their Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.

§ I. *Arguments to prove the perpetuity of hell.*

WHEN the great and blessed God had a mind to make known his wisdom, his power, and his goodness amongst creatures, he built this world as a theatre, in which those perfections of his nature might be displayed amidst the various work of his hands. He spread it round with the blessings of life and pleasure, he overhung it with a canopy of skies and stars, and placed the glorious bodies of the sun and moon there, to appear in their alternate seasons; and even amidst the ruins which sin has brought into this world, yet still every eye may behold the traces of an almighty, an all-wise, and a bountiful God.

When the same divine and sovereign Being designed to exalt and diffuse the wonders of his grace among the best of his creatures, he built a heaven for them, and furnished it with unknown varieties of beauty and blessing: and we would hope in our appointed season to be raised to this upper world, and there to behold the riches of divine magnificence and mercy, and to be sharers thereof among the rest of the happy inhabitants.

But since sin and wickedness has entered into his creation of men and angels, he saw it necessary also to display the terrors of his justice, and to make his wrath and indignation known amongst rebellious creatures, that he might maintain a just awe and reverence of his own authority, and a constant hatred of sin through all his dominions. For this purpose he has built a hell, a dreadful building indeed, in some dismal region of his vast empire, where he has amassed together all that is grievous and formida-

ble to sensible beings, and wicked spirits carry their own inward hell thither with them, a hell of sin and misery; and though he has sent his own Son to acquaint us with the distresses and agonies of that doleful world, and to warn us of the danger of falling into it; yet if any of us should be so unhappy as to continue in an obstinate state of impenitence and disobedience to God, we shall be made to confess, by dreadful experience, that not one-half hath been told us.

Therefore hath God set before us these terrors in his word, that we might flee from this wrath to come, and avoid these sufferings. And therefore do his ministers, by his commission, proceed to publish this vengeance and indignation of the Lord, that sinners might be awakened to lay hold on the hope that is set before them, and might be affrighted from plunging themselves into this pit of anguish, whence there is no redemption.

We have taken a short survey of these miseries, in the 'kind and nature of them,' in some former discourses, and we are now come to the last thing contained in our Saviour's description of hell, and that is the 'perpetuity' of it. The misery is everlasting in both the parts of it; for 'their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.' The arguments which shall be employed to prove it, are such as these.

I. *Argument.* The express words of Christ and his Apostles pronounce these punishments eternal; and surely these words are given to be the foundation of our faith and practice, and the rules of our hope and fear. My text seems to carry plain and unanswerable evidence in it. 'Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.' And it is many times repeated in this chapter, and that with a special accent on the eternal duration of it, to make that circumstance of it more observed, and to aggravate the terror. Such an awful repetition from the lips of the Son of God should make the sound of the vengeance dwell longer on the ear, and the threatening sink deeper into the soul.

Let us next observe the final sentence which Christ, as Judge, pronounces against impenitent sinners among the sons of men, as well as against fallen spirits, in Matt. xxv. It is this, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' And as soon as the

sentence is pronounced, it is immediately executed, as our Saviour foretels, 'in the last' verse: 'These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.' What he pronounces as a Judge, he foretels also as a Prophet, that it shall be put in execution.

The express word of God, in describing the punishment of sinners by the pen of his two apostles, Paul and John, declares the same thing, 2 Thes. i. 9, 'They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.' And the book of Revelation gives us assurance that these miseries shall have no end. Rev. xiv. 10, 11. The 'antichristian' idolaters, 'who worship the beast, shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out, without mixture, into the cup of his indignation, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.' Jude the apostle bears his testimony in the same manner, ver. 6; 'the' damned 'spirits, who kept not their first station, are' said to be 'cast down' into hell, 'and bound in chains of everlasting darkness.' Now, suppose a man plunged into a pit of thick darkness, by the command of God, and bound there with everlasting chains; what hope can he ever have of deliverance?

And if Christ, and his apostles who were taught by him and by his blessed Spirit, assert this punishment shall be eternal, who shall dare to contradict them? Who is there so rash and confident as to say, 'This torment shall not be everlasting, this worm one day shall die, and this fire shall be quenched?" Does it not approach to the crime of contradicting the Almighty, and the true God?

II. *Argument.* There is a sort of infinite evil in sin, arising from the consideration of the person against whom it is committed, i. e. the great and blessed God: for every crime, according to the law of nations, and the common sense of mankind, takes its aggravation from the dignity of the person offended, as well as from the heinousness of the act; so reproaches or assaults against a king, or a father, are much more criminal and heinous than the same assaults or reproaches cast on an equal or an inferior; but all sin being an offence against God, an infinite object, and a violation of his law, is a dishonour of infinite Majesty, an affront to the divine authority, and therefore its aggrava-

tions arise in that proportion to a sort of infinity, and require an equal punishment. But because the nature of a creature cannot suffer infinite punishment in the 'intenseness of the pain,' therefore he must bear it to an 'infinite duration,' i. e. to all everlasting.

When divine justice pronounces a sentence against the sinner, equal to the demerit of sin, it must be infinite, i. e. eternal; and the sinner shall never 'be released from the prison' and the punishment, 'till he has paid the utmost farthing,' Matth. ix. 25, and till he has made satisfaction to God, equal to his demands, and the demerit of the offence.

I know this argument is treated with much contempt and derision among those of the moderns. who would diminish the evil of sin, and shorten the punishment of it. But it is much easier to ridicule it than to answer it. A jest is no refutation. And after my best survey of it, I think, without prejudice or partiality, the force of it seems to me unanswerable as to the desert of sin; and I am not ashamed to employ it in the support of this truth.

But a very feeble opposition can be made to it by those who say, that 'if sin be counted an infinite evil, and must have infinite punishment, then all sins are equal, and will require equal punishment,' for there are no different degrees in infinity, or in things which are infinite.

But our Saviour has taught us, that there are certainly various degrees of punishment as well as of sin. He assures us that 'it shall be more tolerable for' the inhabitants of 'Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than it shall be for Capernaum and Bethsaida,' where he had preached and wrought his wonders, Luke x. 12, &c. and the reason is plain, viz. because the sins of Sodom were less than theirs.

And it is very easy to answer this pretence or objection about the equality of all sins, for sins may have different degrees of guilt and aggravation as to the act, where the object is the same, whether this object be finite or infinite; as the murder of a father or a king, is a much greater crime than a reproach or slander cast on the same persons. So the wilful hatred of God and blasphemy against him, with continued malice and public violent opposition to his name, or law, or gospel, are far greater sins than a single neglect of his daily worship for fear of persecution, or a

distrusting his providence, though both have the same infinite Being, i. e. God, for their object; and in this sense there is a sort of infinity in each of the crimes.

And accordingly punishments may be proportioned to every crime, for they may differ greatly in the degree of severity and torture, though they may all be equal or eternal in the duration. Sodom and Gomorrah, Capernaum and Bethsaida, may all suffer infinite or everlasting sorrow, and yet the degrees of their pain may be exceedingly different all the while. They may have the same infinity of duration, though very different as to the intenseness or degree of the pain.

III. *Argument.* If the iniquities committed in this life were not punished with torment which is everlasting, yet the damned in hell are ever sinning against God, and therefore they provoke the vengeance of God to continue his punishing hand upon them forever. The law of God, in all its demands of duty, its prohibitions of sin, as well as in its sanctions of punishment, continues forever in force in heaven, and earth, and hell, and we see not how it can be abrogated where it arises from the very nature of God and a creature: and 'cursed is he that continues not in all things which the law requires,' Gal. iii. Every new sin demands a new curse and a new punishment, and there is no reason which forbids a righteous governor to cease punishing, while the rebellious creature will not cease to offend, and especially while he maintains an everlasting enmity and rebellion against the law of God his Creator.

If there were any humble meltings of repentance in the guilty soul, if there were any sincere mournings in the sinful creature for having offended his Maker, if there were any softness of heart, relenting under a sense of the evil of sin, and returning to obedience and duty, even this would not oblige a righteous and wise governor to forgive the criminal; repentance is no compensation for a wilful offence; nor is it thought unrighteous or unwise for a prince to punish even a penitent offender with death.

But let us propose the case in utmost favour to a sinner against the blessed God, let us imagine that divine wisdom and divine mercy perhaps might be supposed to contrive and to offer some proposals to justice in a way of compassion, and might enquire whether the sentence of punish-

ment could not be reversed, or the terror of it relieved, or some new state of trial proposed. Let it be added in favour of the criminal, that we do not find through all the book of God the actual practice of true repentance beginning among men, but it has been always followed with proportionable degrees of compassion from God. But, on the other side, when there is nothing found in the heart of a sinner but obstinacy, and malice, and revenge, cursing and blasphemy against the Almighty, without the least moving or melting into a genuine penitence or holy sorrow, without any meek submission to the majesty and justice of God, or humble imploring of his mercy, what reasonable hope can such wretches have, that their chains of darkness should be broken, and the prisoners released from vengeance? When they shall curse his justice, because it punishes their crimes, when they shall curse his mercy, because it did not save their souls, and curse and blaspheme the blood of the blessed Jesus, because it has not washed away their sins, what possible excuse can be made for such creatures? Or what possible expectation can there be for such criminals, but an everlasting continuance of the fiery indignation?

Here it will be replied, but why should we suppose, and much more, why should we affirm, that 'the damned will never repent?' Are they not free in the other world from this flesh and blood, wherein there are so many unruly passions and appetites? Are they not far remote from all the temptations of flesh and sense, of intemperance, ambition, and covetousness? Have they not understanding to see divine truths more clearly than in this world? Have they not reason to distinguish good and evil, and free-will to choose that which is good? Will they not hate all sin, since they have been so long taught the mischief of sin by their sufferings? And is there any thing fitter than their agonies and torture by fire, to make men know and feel the dreadful evil of sinning against God, and to awaken them to repentance?

To this I answer, let us judge a little concerning the sinners in hell, by the practice of sinners on earth. How many wretched creatures are there who have been long imprisoned, and perhaps punished for crimes against the state, and yet persist in their rebellious temper, and are never convinced they were in the wrong, so far as to change

their treason into sincere submission, repentance, and obedience? Was not Pharaoh, king of Egypt, an instance of the stubbornness and impenitence of human nature, when in opposition to ten dreadful plagues he would still pursue the flying Israelites, and destroy a people beloved of God? Is not hardness and enmity against the governor often increased by the severe punishments that criminals lie under? Have these punishments any sufficient power to soften their hearts into true repentance?

What though they do not live in the midst of sensual temptations, yet who knows how far their spirits, having been immersed in flesh and blood, may carry with them inward raging appetites to those sinful sensualities and defiling pleasures, of which they are for ever deprived?

Let me ask again, have the devils ever repented in almost six thousand years? Are they not the same enemies to God, and his glory, and his image through all ages? And though the damned spirits of men are absent from this world, and their evil companions on earth, yet are they not in the fittest company to teach them pride, and rage, resentment and malice, and the most unfit to teach them humility, repentance, and obedience to God? And when they have perversely sinned away all the means of grace in this life, is it reasonable to imagine, that God will powerfully soften their hearts by his sovereign grace, since he has never given the least hint or instance of it in all the discoveries made in the Bible? And has it not been often one way of God's punishing sinners here in this world, by letting them go on in their iniquity and madness to the end? And why may not the wisdom and justice of God see fit to treat sinners, who have been incorrigible in this life, by the same method in the world to come?

IV. *Argument.* The natural effects and consequences of sin living in the soul, are misery and torment so long as the soul lives, i. e. forever. Sin, though it be a moral evil, as it is committed against God, yet it is such an enemy to the nature of man, that where it has established its habit and temper in the soul, it naturally prepares constant anguish of conscience and certain misery. A wicked spirit all over averse to God and goodness, gone from this world and all the soothing or busy amusements of it, intense in its desires of happiness, and yet a stranger to all that

can make it truly happy, and at the same time shut out by God's righteous judgment, from all the means and hopes of grace, must needs be miserable, and has prepared a state of endless misery for itself, because its nature and duration are immortal. An unholy creature who loves not God, and cannot delight in things holy and heavenly, but derives its chief joy from sinful pleasures, can never taste of felicity, can never relish the satisfactions that come from the knowledge, and love, and enjoyment of God; and when it is torn away, and banished from all the sensible amusements of this life, it must and will be a wretched creature in the world of spirits, and that by the very course of nature. And God cannot be obliged to change the established course of nature to relieve this misery which the sinner had wilfully brought on himself; nor can God make him happy without giving him a new temper of holiness, which he is not obliged to do by any perfection of his nature, or any promise of his grace.

If the souls of men are immortal, such will their passions be, their desires, their fears, and their sorrows. Now their natural desires of happiness, as I have said, will be intense and strong, when God, the spring of all happiness, who hath been renounced and abandoned by them, hath now forever forsaken them, and separated himself from them. What can there remain for them but everlasting darkness and despair, without a dawn of hope through all the ages of eternity? Their guilty consciences, with the views of God's unchangeable holiness, will forever fill them with new fears and terrors, what shall be the next punishment they are to suffer. Such is the state of devils at this time, who expect a more dreadful punishment at the great day, as several places of scripture make evident. Their being immersed in the guilt of sin, and under the constant and tyrannical dominion of it, will overwhelm them with present grief, with cutting sorrows, and horror unspeakable, which will sink into the centre of their souls, and make them an eternal terror and plague to themselves.

Again, let us consider that their immortality of soul will be spent in 'thinking:' and what comfortable or hopeful object is there in heaven, earth, or hell, on which they can fix or employ their thoughts for one moment, to give a short release from their extreme misery? So that they

are left in endless successions of most painful thoughts and passions from the very nature of things.

Again, suppose this body of mine were by nature immortal, and was designed by my Creator in its constitution to live forever; and suppose by my own folly and madness, my own wilful indulgence of appetite and passion, I had brought some dreadful distemper into my flesh which was found to be incurable, whether it be the gout or the stone, or some more terrible malady of the nervous kind, must not this gout, by necessity of nature, become an immortal gout? Must not these distempers be immortal distempers, and create eternal pain? And is the God of nature bound to work a miracle to cure and heal these diseases which I have wilfully brought upon myself by my own iniquities, and that after many warnings? Is it unrighteous in God to let me languish on amidst my agonies and groans as long as my nature continues in being, i. e. to immortality? And especially when there are valuable ends in divine providence, and God's government of the world, to be subserved, by suffering such wilful, rebellious, and impenitent creatures to become sacrifices to their own iniquity and his justice, and perpetual monuments to other worlds of their own madness and his holiness. Such is the case of a sinful spirit, and therefore a God of justice may pronounce upon it, and execute the eternal misery.

§ II. *The strongest and most plausible objections against the perpetuity of hell answered.*

I think these reasons, which have been given, are sufficient to justify the ministers of the gospel in representing the punishments of hell as everlasting. But man, sinful man, does not love to hear of this dreadful perpetuity of hell. They would fain find some period to these sorrows, they search on every side if there be no way for escape from this prison, no door of mercy, no cranny of hope left among the reasons of things, or among the attributes, or the transactions of the blessed God: and they are ever proposing some methods to cut short this eternity, which scripture ascribes to the punishment of impenitent sinners. I shall endeavour therefore to give a fair and plain answer to the strongest objections against this doctrine which I ever yet have met with.

The first objection is raised from a 'criticism on the words of scripture.' The Greek and Hebrew words, say

they, which we translate eternal and everlasting, where the torments of hell are mentioned, are not always used for proper and complete eternity, they sometimes signify only 'a long duration.' So God gave Abraham and his seed the land of 'Canaan for an everlasting possession,' Gen. xvii. 8, but now the Turks possess it. Several of the statutes of the Levitical law were said to be everlasting, Lev. xvi. 34, but they are all abolished in the gospel. The sons of Aaron had an 'everlasting priesthood, conferred upon them, Exod. xl. 15, but this office is cancelled by the kingdom of the Messiah, and finished forever.

Besides, let it be remembered, say the objectors, that the Hebrew and Greek words, signify only the various ages or periods of time which belong to the duration of creatures, or to some constitutions of God concerning his creatures: and they should be translated an age, or ages, more properly than any thing else. And the Greek adjective, when applied to creatures, can relate only to these ages; but these expressions were never designed to enter into God's own eternity, either before the existence of this world, or after the consummation of it: upon which reason it is highly improper and absurd to assert, that the duration or punishment of creatures in hell shall be properly eternal and equal to the duration of the blessed God himself. Now since every thing in God's transactions towards creatures is sometimes limited by these terms, or ages, which are periods of time that shall be finished, why may not the damnation and the sorrows of hell be also finished and cancelled at a certain length of years, though the common words, which we translate 'eternal' and 'everlasting,' be ascribed to them in Scripture?

Answ. 1. These are the same words both in Greek and Hebrew, by which God expresses 'his own eternity,' which is absolute and complete without end. He is 'the everlasting God,' Gen. xxi. 33, 'the eternal God, and his everlasting arms,' Deut. xxxiii. 27, Rom. i. 20, and xvi. 26, and several other places. These are the words also by which the scripture expresses the duration of the 'felicities of heaven,' and the eternal life and happiness of the saints, Dan. xii. 2, Rom, vi. 23, John iii. 15, &c. Now, why should we not suppose the same words to signify the same duration, when the Old or New Testament speaks of 'everlasting burnings' as the vengeance of God

against the wicked, Isai. xxxiii. 14, or 'everlasting shame and contempt?' Dan. xii. 2. And especially where the joys of the saints, and the misery of sinners, are set in opposition to one another in the same text, as in Dan. xii. and Matt. xxvi. 45, 'The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal?' And yet further, when we find this doctrine sufficiently confirmed by many other places of Scripture which set forth the eternity of these torments? I grant that the eternity of God himself, before this world began, or after its consummation, has something in it so immense and so incomprehensible, that in my most mature thoughts I do not choose to enter into those infinite abysses; nor do I think we ought usually, when we speak concerning creatures, to affirm positively, that their existence shall be equal to that of the blessed God, especially with regard to the duration of their punishment. Perhaps this sort of language may carry in it something beyond what we are called to discourse about, at least in this mortal state, and therefore such comparisons are more safely omitted.

But I would remark here still, that these ages, both of reward and punishment, which are pronounced concerning saints or sinners, do but begin in their perfection at the end of this world; and thence it follows, that they must enter far away into the eternity of God's existence yet to come. And the saints will be made happy, and the sinners will be punished, for long ages after the end of this world, and all the ages of it.

And though God, by his Spirit, has not been pleased to make this comparison expressly, nor assert our duration commensurate with his own, yet he is pleased to express the duration of the punishment of sinners in the same common language and phrases, whereby he expresses his own duration, and the happiness of the saints: and hereby he encourages us to express these punishments by the same common words in our language too, rather than venture to cut them short by a Greek or Hebrew criticism, without any divine warrant or necessity.

Now are there any sinners so void of understanding, of so daring and desperate a mind, as to venture their 'eternal all' upon such a poor criticism of words? Even upon supposition that these terms in the Greek and Hebrew might signify any long duration short of eternity: yet

there is a terrible hazard in confining them to this sense, since they do not denote a proper eternity, when they describe the duration of the blessed God; and I think we may add also, the duration of the happiness of the saints. *

Besides, let it be remembered, that the other expressions of Scripture, which denote and pronounce the perpetuity or eternity of these punishments, are not liable to the same criticism or ambiguity of a word. 'Their fire' shall be 'unquenchable,' or 'is not quenched, their worm dieth not. They have no rest day nor night, they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever,' Rev. xx. 10. These expressions seem to carry with them a more certain signification of the perpetual continuance of the pun-

* I do not understand this sentence, as it stands in the text of Watts. It seems to be an admission of what contradicts and overthrows his own argument, viz. that "these are the same words, both in Greek and Hebrew, by which God expresses *his own eternity*, which is absolute and complete, without end." Consistently with this position it cannot be said, that "they do not denote a proper eternity;" for, if the eternity of God be not proper and absolute, what can be such? It ought to read, "there is a terrible hazard in confining them to this sense," (the sense assumed by the objector,) "since they *must* denote a proper eternity, when they describe the duration of the blessed God," &c. A few paragraphs antecedent to this, the author makes another concession, which I think nearly overturns his argument, or at least much abates its force. He says, "Nor do I think we ought usually, when we speak concerning creatures, to affirm positively, that their existence shall be equal to that of the blessed God, especially with regard to the duration of their punishment." By "their existence," in this very obscure sentence, I suppose that the author means the *duration* of their future existence; for I cannot suppose him guilty of the absurdity of referring to the *mode* of the divine existence in this connexion. He therefore appears to signify that we should not affirm positively, that our future existence will be absolutely, and in this respect, like the existence of God, without end, and especially that the duration of punishment will be interminable; and if we ought not to affirm it positively, our inability to do so must of course, be owing to want of evidence—to uncertainty. This is giving up the very point which the author has undertaken to prove! The doctrine of future existence, although entirely agreeable to reason, and supported by it, can be made certain to our minds, only by the light of revelation. That only source of certain evidence on this point employs the strongest terms which language affords, to express the interminable existence of every human being: and it uses the same terms to express the endless duration of the punishment of wicked men and angels. It never suggests a single doubt of the absolute eternity of either. I cannot see, therefore, by what rule of scripture, or of reason, we can be required "not to affirm positively," that the existence of rational creatures shall not be equal in its future duration with that of God, or that the punishment of the wicked will be less durable than their eternal existence.—Ed.

ishment. Now can the tempter and the deceiver of souls have so unhappy an influence over you, as to persuade you to venture onward in the paths of sin, to put off religion, and delay your repentance, and neglect the means of salvation, in hopes that hereafter this weak criticism, upon some of the threatenings, may take place before the Judge of the whole earth, and thus excuse or save you? Is not such a sorry refuge and presumption a dangerous and a dismal sign upon impenitent sinners, that sin and Satan have darkened your understanding, and confounded your judgment, as well as hardened your hearts, in order to your everlasting destruction?

Answ. 2. Suppose the punishments of hell continue only for a long time, and not for an endless immortality, yet this time would certainly be found exceedingly long for sinners to bear the torment even according to their own criticisms. Let us consider this matter under some particulars. The Jewish dispensation, which is sometimes called 'everlasting,' stood nearly about fifteen hundred years, from Moses to Christ; and are ye content to languish and groan under torments and miseries for fifteen hundred years, merely to satisfy your vicious appetite of pleasure for a few days or a few years of this mortal life?

Again; the 'rebellious sinners,' who were destroyed at the flood, and their spirits, which were sent into the prison of hades, or hell, were certainly confined there four and twenty hundred years: and if they were released then, as some imagine, by the preaching of Christ to them, it is a long and dreadful time to continue under the vengeance of God; and is it worth while for any man to continue in sin on earth, and to venture this length of punishment in hell?

What I build this computation upon, are some expressions of St. Peter, 1 Epist. iii. 19, 20, where Christ is said to 'preach unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah;' some have supposed, that this text informs us of Christ's descent into hell after his death, and then preaching to those rebels who were drowned in the flood near two thousand four hundred years before, in order to awaken them to repentance and salvation: whereas others think this text may be better expounded concerning the spirit of Christ given to Noah,

which made him a preacher of righteousness, when he foretold and threatened a flood of waters, and called men to repentance.

But if it should be granted, that those rebellious spirits among the dead did all repent, and were delivered by this preaching of Christ, would you choose to indulge the delights of sin for a short season, and venture twenty-four hundred years of torment and anguish for it?

Yet further, the devils have lain under punishment near six thousand years, viz. four thousand before Christ came, and almost two thousand years since, which may be thus computed from what St. Jude says of them. The 'angels who kept not 'their first station' were 'cast into chains of darkness,' presently before the creation of this our world; for they were fallen, and they tempted Adam to sin as soon as this world was made: and they had been confined in these chains from that time about four thousand years before Christ came, and are waiting still for yet sharper punishment at the judgment of the great day, Jude vi; and it is evident that they are conscious of this terror and this future increase of punishment, for they expostulated with our Saviour, Matt. viii. 29, 'Art thou come to torment us before the time?' Now it is near two thousand years since Christ came, and from the time of their sinning, unto this day, it is almost six thousand years: and when the great day of judgment comes, their fiercer punishment is but then to begin. And are not the devil and his angels sentenced and confined to dwell together with the wicked children of Adam, when they shall be consigned at that dreadful day to the same 'everlasting fire' and torment, which was prepared for those evil spirits? And who knows when their torment will end? Now what folly and hardness of heart, or rather what madness is it for men to continue in their sins, to delay their return to God, and abandon the grace of the gospel, under this foolish flattery and wild presumption, that above six thousand years hence perhaps a certain day may come when the 'worm' of conscience will die, and the 'fire' of hell will be quenched? Such presumption is madness and distraction rather than reasoning.

The 'second objection' is derived from the 'justice and equity of God.' Surely may some person say, the justice of God will proportion the punishment to the offence

but since our sins are but the actions of mortal and short-lived creatures, and are committed in a few years of time, why should the punishment be immortal, and the ages be lengthened out to eternity? Can a righteous God pronounce such a severe and unjust sentence, and execute it in its full dimensions?

Answ. It is not the length of time which wicked men spent in committing their sins, nor the nature of the persons who have sinned, that determines the measures of punishment, but the dignity of that infinitely glorious Being, against whom sin is committed, that gives such a high aggravation as to require punishment without end. How many instances are there among men wherein offenders against their neighbours, or against a magistrate, who spent but a few moments in the crime, yet are doomed to imprisonment for months and years? And a lower degree of trespass against a king, which is short of high treason, is sometimes punished with confiscation of goods, and with poverty and close imprisonment for life. And by the same reason, the sins of men being committed against a God of infinite majesty, require an endless punishment, as I have proved in the second argument: and therefore divine justice pronounces or inflicts no longer penalty than the crimes of men deserve, according to their aggravations. If any sinners tarry then till they have paid the utmost farthing to divine justice, I grant God will release them, but he has given us no hope before.

The 'third objection' is drawn from 'the sovereignty and goodness of God.' It is granted, say they, that the threatenings of eternal death are denounced against sinners in Scripture, yet it is not necessary God should execute them to the full. When a law is made, the threatenings of it only declare what punishment the offender shall be exposed to, and shall be obliged to bear when it is inflicted; but these expressions in a law do not oblige the government to inflict that sentence with all its terrors. It is granted, that in the case of promises, truth and veracity oblige the promiser to fulfil them punctually, because the right of the thing promised passes over to that other person to whom the promise was made, and he hath such a right to require it, that it is injustice to withhold it from him; and therefore everlasting felicity must be given to the righteous: but in threatenings the case is otherwise;

for though the full punishment is due to sinners, yet they will never require the execution of it; and the goodness of God will incline him to relieve the sufferer, and to release him from the severity of such a punishment, where his veracity or truth does not forbid it.

To this I answer two ways:

1st, I will not debate this point of law now, how far a governor of sovereign and absolute authority can dispense with his own threatenings, can omit the execution of them, relax the degree of threatened punishment, or shorten the duration of it. But let it be considered, that here is not only the threatening of God, the universal Governor, but the prediction of this eternal punishment, by a 'God who cannot lie.' God's own truth and veracity are concerned in this case, since his Son Jesus, who is the greatest of his messengers, together with the Prophets and Apostles, have in the name of God often foretold, that these punishments shall be eternal: and therefore whatsoever an absolute governor might do, as to shortening the punishment threatened, in a way of mercy and relaxation; yet I cannot see how the truth and veracity of God himself, or the veracity of his Son Jesus Christ, who is the great Prophet, or the truth of the rest of his prophets and messengers can be maintained, if this punishment be not executed according to the many express predictions of it. These all agree to tell us, by inspiration from heaven, in various forms of speech, that the torments of hell shall be everlasting; and (as I hinted before) the man Jesus who pronounces this eternal sentence as a Lord and a Judge, foretels it also as a Prophet, that the execution of it shall be to all everlasting.

Answ. 2. Obstinate and impenitent sinners have no reason to expect, that the goodness of God should release them from their miseries, since the justice and the holiness, the righteous government and authority of God in his law require and demand their due of honour, as well as his goodness. Do we not see that these honours of divine justice, and of God's hatred of sin, have been continually demanded and executed in the infinite and innumerable evils, sorrows, miseries, diseases and deaths, that have been spread over this world almost six thousand years because of sin? Nor does his goodness forbid or hinder it.

And let it be remembered too, that all this immense variety and long succession of plagues and terrors arose originally from the just indignation and resentment of God against one sin, even that of the first man. Who was it that burnt Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven? Who was it that chained fallen angels in darkness to a more terrible judgment? Was it not a God of supreme goodness? Who sent famines, and pestilences, and slaughters all over the earth in many distinct generations, whereby mankind have been made abundantly wretched, and plunged into millions of distresses? And yet the goodness of God abides forever. And while the great God is acting according to the glories of his nature and government in punishing rebellious creatures, his goodness will feel no soft and sensible impressions from all their groans and outcries; but if I may so express it, will be changed into just indignation without end. And the language of it to those impenitent wretches will be this, 'because I have called and ye refused, ye have set at naught all my counsel and would none of my reproof, I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall ye call upon me, but I will not answer; ye shall seek me early, but ye shall not find me; for ye hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; ye would none of my counsels, ye despised all my rebukes; therefore shall ye eat of the fruit of your own way, and be filled with your own devices.' Take them, angels, 'bind them hand and foot, and cast them into everlasting fire and utter darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,' Prov. i. Matt. xxii. 13.

Let us cease then to murmur against the threatenings and the transactions of the great God, till we are become fitter judges of his perfections and their demands. Let us cavil no more against his conduct and government, till we can teach him how far his punishing justice shall go in the execution of his threatenings, and till we can assign to him the point and limit where his goodness shall interpose and restrain that justice.

The 'fourth objection' is derived from the 'rectitude of the nature of God,' or 'his common equity and mercy united,' which has been represented in this manner. Sup-

pose one of the damned spirits among mankind should address himself to the great God in such sort of language as this, "Lord, I was created by thy sovereign pleasure without my own will, I did not desire to be made, much less to be born in such a relation to Adam, whereby I brought a sinful nature into the world with me; but I was united by thy power and pleasure to a body which had the seeds of sin and misery in it. There were strong appetites and violent passions mingled with my flesh and blood, which I myself had no hand in procuring; they fermented in me with much vehemence, and I was tempted to many excesses: I made some resistance at first, and many times tried to subdue them, but I was overcome. At last I suffered myself to be carried away by the stream of these sinful affections and appetites which I could not possibly avoid, nor easily subdue. Is it agreeable to thine equity, O blessed God, to punish such a poor wretch with everlasting torments? And can thy mercy continue to see this my misery forever and ever, and not help me? I intreat thee, O thou almighty Author of my being, to destroy and annihilate me utterly soul and body: take away this being which I never asked nor desired; nay, which I would not have consented to accept among the sinful race of mankind, because in this track of generation and existence I stood much more likely to be miserable than to be happy."

Answ. 1st. As for the reasonableness and equity of the conveyance and communication of the original effects of the sin of 'Adam' through every generation of man, it is granted there are some difficulties attending it; but these are generally answered by the writers on that subject; and for me to divert from my present discourse, in order to debate this point here, would be too tedious.

The equity of this wise and awful constitution of God has been lately vindicated in a large treatise on the 'ruin and recovery of mankind,' especially in the second edition of that book. But it is enough for my present argument to say, that God himself will make the equity of this constitution to appear with much more evidence and conviction in the last great day, when millions of actual criminals shall stand before the judgment-seat, who owe the first spring of their sin and ruin to our common parent, and yet will fall under the righteous condemnation of the judge.

Answ. 2. When God decreed to give thee a being, O sinner, and designed thee in his eternal ideas to be a man, placed among a thousand blessings of nature and providence, it was then a favour of thy Creator; for thou wert designed also in this original divine idea to have full sufficiency of power to become wise and happy. It was also a favour from thy Creator, that he took all these thy sufficiencies of power, and put them into the hand of one man, even the father of thy race, because he was as wise, and holy, and as well able as any man of his posterity could be, to preserve his station in the favour of God, and to secure thy happiness together with his own; and he had much stronger obligations to obey his Maker, and more powerful motives to secure thy happiness than thou thyself, or any single man could possibly have, because he was intrusted with the felicity of so many millions of his own dear offspring, as well as his own. Now though Adam, thy first father, being thus furnished with sufficiencies of power, and with the strongest obligations to preserve himself and thee, has actually sinned and ruined himself and his offspring; (this is indeed an unhappy truth;) but the great God is not to blame, who has not only acted wisely but kindly towards his creatures in this constitution, because so far as we can judge, it was much more probable that Adam would have maintained his innocence and his happiness, together with that of his offspring.

Again, when the race of man was ruined, and God saw that every man would come into the world under unhappy circumstances of guilt and corruption of nature, he provided a covenant of grace, and brought thee into some knowledge of it. And this had been effectual to have recovered and saved thee from the ruins of the fall if thou hadst exerted all thy force, employed all thy natural powers of understanding and will for this purpose, and used all thy diligence to follow the methods of his grace, and hadst sought earnestly for divine aids. For there is no man among the damned who is able to say, 'I have done every thing that was in my power to do.' No man shall be condemned for what was utterly impossible for him to avoid. It is confessed indeed, thou art laid under some hardships and difficulties by the sin of thy first father; yet it is thine own actual and personal crimes for which thou art here condemned at this judgment, wherein 'every one shall be'

judged and 'rewarded according to his works.' It is for many wilful offences against the law of God, and for sinning against the offers of divine grace; it is for obstinacy against thy own conscience, and all the outward and inward monitions of thy duty, that thou art fallen under this sentence, and because thou didst not labour and strive against sin, and resist it even to the end of thy state of life and trial. Thou hast had many an inward reproof for sin, many a secret or public call to virtue, and perhaps loud and fair warnings of thy danger; but thou hast turned a deaf ear to them all, and it is thy own folly, obstinacy, and iniquity, that have brought thee into this misery, and thou must eat the fruit of thy own works.

If there should be any person found indeed among Jews, Gentiles, or Christians, who can justly complain, 'I have not had a fair and full state of trial, and yet I am condemned,' I think we may grant that the righteous God will release such from their misery, after they have worn out a proper number of years in punishment proportionable to their past crimes; and that there shall be a fair, and full, and proper state of trial appointed to them before they shall be utterly and irretrievably miserable. But if no such person be found there, if there be no such just complaint to be made among the millions of the damned, then they may be still continued in their prison and punishment without any imputation upon divine justice and equity.

Answ. 3. Whensoever any such criminal in hell shall be found making such a sincere and mournful address to the righteous and merciful Judge of all, if at the same time he is truly humble and penitent for his past sins, and is grieved at his heart for having offended his Maker, and melts into sincere repentance, I cannot think that a God of perfect equity and rich mercy will continue such a creature under his vengeance; but rather, that the perfections of God will contrive a way for escape, though God has not given us here any revelation or discovery of such special grace as this.

But on the other hand, whatever melting and moving speeches may be made by sinners here on earth, in compassion to the sinners who are gone before them to hell; yet if no such person be ever found in hell, truly and humbly repenting of his sins, nor have we any reason to think

there ever will, why should a righteous God be obliged to cease punishing a rebel who only is vexed and raged under his own chains, and who continues in the spirit of obstinacy and rebellion against God, and will not repent of it?

'Objection the fifth' is derived from the 'mercy and compassion of God, compared with the mercy and compassion of man.' Surely the compassion of the ever-blessed God, who has described himself rich in mercy, abundant in goodness, and whose very name is 'love,' 1 John iv. 8, must have transcendant tenderness and pity towards his creatures, the work of his hands, above all the compassions that any one fellow-creature can express towards another. Now the very thought and name of eternal punishments, or endless torment, is such as seems to shock the nature of a good-natured man; and though he was ever so much injured, yet he would never have a thought of wishing his enemy any kind of eternal punishment for it, much less of condemning him to everlasting misery, and supporting him in being on purpose to suffer it; and therefore we cannot suppose that God will do it.

This 'objection' is further strengthened by an expression of our Saviour himself, who says, Mark, xviii. 19, 'There is none good, save one, that is God:' as much as to say, there is none equal or comparable in goodness to God himself. And it is further supported still by the common notions which good men have of God; those expressions in the apocryphal writings confirm it, 2 Esd. v. 33, 'Then said the Lord unto me, thou art sore troubled in mind for Israel; lovest thou that people more than he that made them?' And in the same book, chap. viii. 47, 'Thou comest far short, that thou shouldst be able to love my creature more than I.' Now since no good man could wish such a curse or mischief to his worst and most wicked enemy, as torment without end, surely we cannot conceive the great God will ever be so severe as to inflict it.

Answ. 1st. It is readily allowed, that God has more goodness than any creature, but God has also more wisdom and knowledge, which concur with his goodness in all his actions, and he forms a much juster judgment concerning the evil and demerits of sin and rebellion against himself, than it is possible for any creature to form. And I think I may boldly assert, none can know the com

plete evil of sin, or its full desert, but that same glorious Being against whom sin is committed, who knows well the dignity of his own nature and his own law, and what unspeakable injury is done thereto by the sins of men. Now his goodness in all his transactions must be regulated and limited by this infinite wisdom ; and if a man does not see and consent to the just demerits of sin against his Maker, it is because he has less wisdom and knowledge than the great God has, and his tenderness and compassion may run into very great excesses, and may be in some instances a sign of his weakness and folly, as well as of his goodness and pity, as I shall shew under the next answer.

At present let us represent the case in a common instance. When criminals go to execution from month to month, or from year to year, in this great city ; and especially if some of them have a handsome and agreeable appearance, and if they are wringing their hands with outcries, and vexing their own hearts, and are stung by their own consciences for their having brought this misery upon themselves, you will find several of the spectators of so tender a make as to grieve for the execution of such criminals, and to wish in their hearts it was in their power to save them. And yet further, if there are numbers of these wicked creatures that are sent at once to the punishment of the sword or the gallows, there may be many of these spectators grieving for them, and pitying them, and perhaps exclaiming against the severity of the law, and the cruelty of the judge, for condemning such malefactors to death.

But do all these weepers and complainers judge justly of the case? Do they consider how pernicious and ruinous a thing it would be to a government to let such traitors go unpunished ? Do they know, that it is a piece of clemency and goodness to the innocent to punish the wicked ? Or that it is a piece of necessary honour due to the laws, to make those who insolently break them sustain the penalty that the law has appointed? Do they remember that the few good qualities, or supposed talents, or fine appearances which these offenders are possessed of, should out-weigh the demands of the law and justice, the peace of the nation or kingdom, and the restraint of others from the same crimes ?

Answ. 2. The goodness of God, the eternal Spirit, is a

much superior thing to the tenderness and compassion of man dwelling in flesh and blood. Man grows compassionate by a sort of sympathy or sensation of miseries which his fellow-creatures endure; and though this is exceedingly useful for many purposes of human life, and therefore God planted it in our natures; yet it has so much mixture of animal nature with it, that it frequently degenerates into weakness, fondness, and folly. And indeed, if every tender creature must be gratified in this weakness, and form the rules of government, there would never a malefactor fall under execution, but the vilest criminals would be spared, though the government were ruined.

On the other hand, the goodness or mercy of God is a sedate willingness or design to do good to creatures, and particularly to the miserable, but always according to the directions of wisdom and holiness. As God cannot have such anger, resentment, or cruelty in his nature, as mankind may fall into when they are punishing offenders, so properly speaking, he has no such sort of passionate tenderness and sympathy in sparing them. Though the words of greatest affection are sometimes used by the sacred writers to figure out the mercies of God to man; yet God both punishes and spares according to the calm and righteous exercises of his wisdom, and not under the influence of such passions as we feel.

Since therefore the exercise of such sort of passions among men oftentimes appears to be the weakness of nature, joined with their ignorance of the rules of equity, is it reasonable that the great and all-wise God should make such creatures his patterns in the limitation of the exercises of his justice? Or that he should be as weak as they are, and as much moved to swerve from the rules of his own righteous government by such a sort of tenderness as ignorant, weak and foolish man may sometimes express towards criminals in their deserved misery?

It is readily granted, that a wise and a good man may and ought to be sorry and grieved, that any of his fellow-creatures should be so vicious as to bring themselves under so severe a penalty by their own wilful crimes; but still in their calmest and wisest thoughts they acknowledge the wisdom and equity of the government, in inflicting such penalties upon those who heinously offend, and they acquiesce in the sentence and the execution.

Our blessed Lord Jesus himself, who was the wisest and the best of creatures,* looked upon the city of Jerusalem with an eye of compassion, 'and wept over it,' Luke xiii. 34, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not? Therefore behold your house is left unto you desolate." Let it be observed here, that our Saviour had the bowels and compassions, and tenderness of the best of men; but he still maintains the vindictive exercise of the government of God. "Your desolation must and shall come upon you, nor will I forbid or withhold it." And I am sure the human nature of our blessed Saviour was formed nearest to the image of God beyond any creature besides: and as I have hinted before, it is he, who is the supreme messenger of his Father's love, that has pronounced these eternal punishments upon impenitent sinners in many parts of his ministry.

Answ. 3. How far will these objectors permit the justice of God to go in the punishment of impenitent sinners? If eternal punishment must neither be threatened nor inflicted, lest divine goodness be injured, then all mankind, even the worst and vilest of criminals, must certainly be one day delivered from their miseries; and thus the great God, who is infinitely offended, is bound to finish his wrath one day, and return in mercy to the offenders, whether they return to him by repentance or no. What! may the criminal rebel creature with impudence and spite affront the Creator infinitely, and must not the Creator have a right to demand equal vengeance? No, he must not, according to these writers: for if the essential goodness of God do certainly forbid eternal punishments, these absurdities, as gross as they appear, will be the necessary consequences of it: And though the creature be not restrained from sinning, yet the blessed God will be utterly restrained from punishing. And is this a doctrine fit to be believed by Christians, or to be taught by those who have no commission for it from their Bible? Or indeed, will the light of nature and reason ever justify and support this sort of pleading?

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* I. e. as to his human nature.—Ed.

'Objection the sixth' is drawn from the 'wisdom of God in his government of the world.' Surely, will the sinner say, it was for some valuable end that God at first pronounced punishment to attend the sins of his creatures, for 'he does not afflict willingly, nor' delight to 'grieve the children of men.' His design must be therefore one of these two things; either to correct and reform the sinners whom he punishes, and reduce them to their duty, in order to partake of his mercy, or else it must be to 'maintain a public monument and demonstration of his justice,' and to support the authority of his law, and honour of his government, that he may deter other creatures from sinning against him. But when this world is come to its period, and his governing providence over it is finished, and all the means of grace are ended, the first end, viz. 'correction and reformation' ceases. There is no more hope of reforming such sinners as these. And what further need can there be of the secondary design of punishment, viz. the 'demonstration of his justice' in so terrible a manner to 'restrain others from sinning,' when the state of our trial is ended, and all mankind are sent either to heaven or hell?

Answ. 1. I might here reply, by way of concession, that if there were no other intelligent creatures to be witnesses of these eternal demonstrations of God's holiness, his justice and his hatred of sin; and if God himself was the only Being who knew of these eternal punishments, I acknowledge I cannot see sufficient reason for this endless duration of them; I cannot give any probable account why creatures, who are never to be corrected and reformed, should be tormented forever in secret; God perfectly knows his own holiness and justice without such monuments of it; and since he has asserted this punishment, I think there must be some creatures to receive a moral influence from the knowledge of it.

I answer 2dly, when there is a representation made of the punishment of the worshippers of the beast, in Rev. xiv. 10, 11, that 'they shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture, and they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth forever and ever,' it is 'in the presence of the holy angels' as well as in the 'presence of the Lamb.' Angels and other innocent beings may improve such a sight to valuable purposes.

Objection the seventh, When we remember that Jesus Christ himself hath assured us that 'but few shall be saved,' and that the broad way is full of sinners running down to destruction and death; if we suppose these punishments to be endless, some will be ready to say, What! shall the greatest part of God's creatures be made miserable forever and ever? Is this consistent with the wisdom and goodness of the blessed God, to form such an immense multitude of souls dwelling in bodies, to make them forever miserable? What will a God of goodness have to prove his goodness to his creatures, if far the greatest part of them are left in everlasting sorrows? *

Answ. The far greatest part of the creation of God may be holy and happy still. For this world of ours, ev-

* How can the goodness of God be proved to wicked creatures? They will assent to the evidence of his goodness, only while they are left to follow their inclinations with impunity. But God, as the moral Governor of the universe, as essentially holy and just, cannot leave the violators of his law unpunished. To treat the obedient and disobedient alike, would be opposed to all our ideas of justice, and would effectually obliterate all distinction between virtue and vice, holiness and wickedness. As soon as a wicked creature becomes the subject of deserved punishment, no proof that can be offered, will satisfy him that God is good. The impenitent sinner's notion of goodness is inaccurate and selfish. Whatever falls in with his preferred enjoyments and pursuits, is good in his esteem; whatever crosses or destroys them, he views as evil. Therefore, evil is *his* good, and what is truly good, he pronounces evil. A holy creature perceives and experiences, in every thing and every where, manifest proofs of the goodness of God; in the punishment itself of the wicked, he discovers this, as it restrains them from working deeper and more diffusive evil. Had all the transgressors of mankind, instead of a part of them, been subjected to deserved punishment, there could have been no objection raised from this against the goodness of God, among those who perceive the consistency of goodness and justice, and who cannot deem that being perfectly good, who is not at the same time perfectly just. That any part of guilty men are saved, and saved too in entire consistency with justice, is indeed a wonderful illustration of the goodness of God, as well as of his other attributes. But without depending upon the hypothetical answer to this objection which follows in the text, it is sufficiently met, by denying that God formed a single soul to be miserable, and by affirming the truth, that the "immense number" spoken of, have rendered themselves miserable, by violating the laws of their moral being. Every one will acknowledge the impossibility of being healthy and free from pain, if we neglect the laws of our physical being; and no one will impute the sufferings which our negligence has incurred, to any want of goodness in God. Why then should that misery be imputed to any defect in the divine goodness, which men bring upon themselves by transgressing the laws of their moral being? And why should any dream, that either at death, or at some undefined period beyond it, these laws will cease to operate on sinners?—Ed.

en all mankind, is a very small portion of God's immense dominions; and when the transactions of our earth, and God's present government of it, shall be finished, he has a thousand other dominions among the planets and stars, which has been proved by the reason of men to a great degree of probability; and these he governs by righteous laws, and though he has not revealed much of them to us in this life, yet he has discovered something of this kind in his own word. He has acquainted us with his wise and righteous government over 'fallen angels,' and what was their sin, viz. their pride and ambition, and what was their punishment for their last rebellion, Jude vi. and this is done by the wisdom and mercy of God to affright *men* from sinning, while we behold how those fallen spirits are exposed and set forth as terrible examples for our warning. And why may not the everlasting punishment of sinners among the children of men be made a standing monument of God's justice, to deter many other worlds from offending him? Other worlds, I say, of unknown creatures, which perhaps may inhabit the planetary globes rolling round the same sun as our earth does; and their state of trial perhaps is not yet begun, or it may be half run out, and yet shall not be finished for some thousands of years?

Or perhaps there are other worlds of spirits, and invisible, incorporeal, intelligent creatures in a state of trial, who may persevere in glorious innocence and complete happiness, to the eternal praise of their Maker's goodness, and may yet be kept in their constant duty and obedience, by having always in their view the eternal punishments of wicked men. See this subject treated of more at large in a book called 'The strength and weakness of human reason,' 2d edition, p. 288.

The counsels of God are far above our reach, and his dominions and governments are unknown to us. What if the great God will have creatures in some of his territories, who in themselves are weak and ready to fall, and may be deterred from sin and apostacy by such standing manifestations of his hatred of it, and his righteous vengeance against it? And since others have been monuments of warning to us, what if he please to make this wicked world of ours, when he has taken the few righteous out of it to heaven; I say, what if he please to make the rest an everlasting spectacle of his justice and holiness

to a hundred or a thousand other worlds, which may be utterly unknown to us? And he may, for this end, reveal his transactions with mankind to those worlds, though he has not revealed much of their affairs to us.

If I were to mention any other objection worthy of notice, I know of none but this, viz. 'some learned men suppose it to have been the opinion of the primitive fathers,' that souls departing from this world were sent into hades, or the state of the dead, where the righteous rest in a state of peace and hope till the resurrection should bring them to heaven: and the most wicked among mankind went also to hades, or this state of the dead, under a long and fearful expectation of the final punishments of hell. But that great multitudes who were of an indifferent character, and who were not so bad but they might be reclaimed, had another state of trial in hades, whither, they say, our Lord Jesus Christ at his death descended and preached the gospel to them, and many of them were recovered, and shall be hereafter raised to eternal life. The chief Scripture whence they borrow this is 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20, of which we have spoken before; and that at the great day of judgment incorrigible sinners should be sent with the devils into the punishment of fire, which, though it may last for a shorter or longer time, yet should destroy both their bodies and their souls forever.

To this I answer, first, If this had been the doctrine of many ancient Christians, yet unless they could bring plainer proofs of it from the word of God than one difficult and obscure text of St. Peter, there is no great reason for us to receive from them such traditions. The word of God is our only test of truth, and our instructor in matters of the invisible world.

Answ. 2d, Though there might be a few of the early writers who seemed to incline to some of these opinions; yet this sense is drawn out from most of them by learned men with much difficulty, uncertainty and conjecture: and there are many others of them who make the punishments of hell as durable as the writers of later ages: nor do they mention or allow of any such sort of purgatory for souls of an indifferent character as this objection pretends. Those who look into their writings will find abundant evidence, that most of them talk of 'eternal punishment by fire' in the very words and language of the

New Testament, and in direct opposition to this doctrine of temporal punishments in hell. I shall cite but two writers, one of which is the very earliest of the fathers, an acquaintance of St. Paul, and that is Clemens the Roman, who in the eighth section of his second epistle says thus :

'Let us therefore repent whilst we are yet upon the earth: for we are as clay in the hand of the artificer. For as the potter, if he makes a vessel, and it be distorted in his hands, or broken, again forms it anew ; but if he hath gone so far as to throw it into the furnace of fire, he can no more bring any remedy to it : so we, whilst we are in this world, should repent with our whole heart for whatsoever evil we have done in the flesh, while we have yet the time of repentance, that we may be saved by the Lord. For after we shall have departed out of this world, we shall no longer be able either to confess our sins, or repent, in the other.' The English reader may find this in Archbishop Wake's translation of the most primitive fathers.

Justin Martyr, who is also one of the most early writers, in the eighth section of his 'first apology, tells us, that Plato 'teaches that Rhadamanthus and Minos punished the unrighteous who came before them : and that we Christians say the same thing will be done,' but it is by Christ : 'when their bodies are joined with their souls, and they shall be punished with eternal punishment, and not for the period of a thousand years only, as Plato said.' This same writer also, in very many places of his works, talks of 'eternal punishment,' and of 'punishment for an endless age,' and 'eternal fire, with eternal sensation' or pain.

Irenæus also after him, as well as Ignatius and Polycarp before him, speak of this 'fire which is not to be quenched,' and of death and punishment, not temporal, but eternal. So that it is really an imposition upon unlearned readers to pretend, that the doctrine which denies the eternity of the punishments of hell, was the common sense of the primitive fathers, though it is granted that Origen and some others might be of this opinion.

To conclude ; since the word of God has expressly assured us, that these punishments of sinful men shall be eternal, it is not for us to hearken to any other doctrines, and neglect what God has said, nor is it fit for us to dis-

pute the wisdom and justice of divine conduct, nor to impeach his goodness. 'Let God be true, though every man be a liar;' let God be wise, though every man be a fool; let God be just and righteous in all his ways, though man vainly murmur against him, and raise these noisy and feeble remonstrances against his judgments. 'The counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure,' in the eternal manifestations of his justice as well as his grace. If there be any supposed inconsistency or cloud of difficulty remaining on his conduct, he will clear it up to the satisfaction of every rational mind one day, and will bring the conscience of every condemned sinner to acknowledge the equity of his proceedings. The whole creation shall then justify the final sentence of judgment on all the sons of men.

I cannot finish this awful argument better than the Apostle finishes the same sort of subject in the ninth and eleventh chapters to the Romans. 'O man, who art thou that repliest against God? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, hath endured, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath, who have fitted themselves for destruction? And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he hath afore prepared unto glory? O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge, the justice and the goodness of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory forever and ever.' Amen.

§ III. *Reflections on the Eternity of Punishment in Hell.*

As we have before drawn various inferences from the nature of those punishments that are prepared from sinners in the world to come, so there are other inferences and terrible reflections which may be derived from the duration or perpetuity of the torments of hell.

Reflect. I. 'What unspeakable anguish and torture doth this one circumstance add to every pain and sorrow of damned creatures, that it is everlasting and has no end?' What unknown twinges in the conscience doth this thought give to the gnawing of the cruel worm, viz. that it is a 'worm that never dies?' What unconceivable force and sting of torment does this add to the fire of God's indigna-

tion in hell, that it is a 'fire which shall never be quenched?' When one year of torment and sorrow is ended, or one thousand years are come to their period, the case of sinners is still much the same, the vengeance remains still as heavy as ever, and seems as far off from its end. This dreadful price, which the justice of God demands for the reparation of our offences against his law and his authority, is a price which creatures can never pay, for it is infinite; and therefore, when a finite creature begins to make payment thereof with his own sufferings, these sufferings must be everlasting.

It is evident, that one wilful sin is sufficient to sink creatures under the indignation of God for six thousand years: I call the angels who sinned for witnesses to this truth. They were formed in holiness and in glory before the creation of this lower world, and probably they sinned and fell before this creation too; and they are yet imprisoned and confined 'under perpetual chains of darkness,' as the word of God tells us, and 'reserved to' everlasting punishment 'at the judgment of the great day.' And if thou, O sinner, among the sons of men, if thou diest in an unregenerate, unholy, and unpardoned state, the sins of thy whole life are charged upon thee, and thou art 'daily treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and thou shalt not escape from this prison till thou hast paid the utmost farthing,' Rom. ii. 5. Matt. v. 26.

If one sin deserves all this misery which has been described, what a dreadful reckoning will the sins of thy whole life come to, when every command of God which thou hast broken shall appear and demand reparation for its injured honour? Remember, O sinner, obstinate and rebellious, remember thou hast to do with a great and dreadful God, who has all thine 'iniquities ever before his eyes;' Isa. lvi. 5, 'Behold they are written before me, and I will recompence, saith the Lord, their iniquity into their bosom.' He is a God that will never forget any one of thy crimes. Amos viii. 7. 'The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, surely I will never forget any of their works.' Though thou hast lost and forgot them, he will bring them again into thy conscience with a terrible remembrance; and when this God comes forth in a way of vengeance, 'every transgression and disobedience shall receive a just recompence of reward. Vengeance

belongeth unto me, saith the Lord,' Heb. ii. 2. and x. 30. 'He that spared not his own Son, when he laid on him the iniquity of us all,' will never spare thee who art the personal and criminal transgressor. Eternal recompences are due to the demands of justice, and he will punish till full payment is made equal to the evil of sin, i. e. to all everlasting.

Reflect. II. 'What infinite and eternal concerns of men hang upon the short and slender thread of human life?' An eternal heaven or an eternal hell depend on our good or ill behaviour in this short and mortal state. While life remains the sinner's hope remains; he abides on the stage of action, and this is the state of trial for eternity: but as soon as the thread of life is broken, immediately ensues endless joy or endless sorrow.

What a poor fleeting vapour, what a thin and frail bubble is this feeble and uncertain thing which we call 'life?' And yet what matters of immense importance depend upon it? This present life is a prize put into our hands, for it is the only time given us to obtain deliverance and escape from eternal death. Life in this view, as mere a bubble and vapour as it is, carries in it something of infinite and everlasting moment: but alas, how wretchedly does foolish and sinful mankind trifle and squander it away amidst a thousand vanities and impertinences, or saunter it out in sloth and laziness, with an utter disregard of the important eternity that depends upon it? What multitudes are there that waste the golden hours of grace and the seasons of hope, in procuring to themselves, by their own wilful iniquities, a length of damnation and everlasting despair?

Whilst we dwell here in the midst of the means of mercy and salvation, there is hope that our sinful souls may be healed of that disease which is breeding the evergnawing worm within us. We may prevent the fuel of divine wrath from kindling into a flame which cannot be quenched: but when once the clock of life has gone through its appointed spaces, and the last hour strikes, whether it be three or five, whether at twelve at noon or at midnight, all hope is forever gone; we are plunged into the regions of death, despondency and darkness, and nothing remains but the actual torture of the 'worm' of conscience to seize on us, and the 'fire' of divine anger actually breaks out, which shall burn to the lowest hell.

O could we but behold ourselves in the glass of wisdom, while we are yet standing upon the slippery edge of this burning precipice, and playing with painted bubbles there, or in warm pursuit of a flying shining feather along the brink of this burning torrent, what fools and madmen should we appear to be even in our own eyes! And yet we go on to practise this folly, this madness, day after day, in spite of all the warnings of God and man, till at last our foot slips in some dreadful moment, and we vanish out of the sight of our companions, and are lost forever.

Reflect. III. If the miseries of hell are eternal, 'how unreasonable a thing is it ever to suffer the loss of any possessions or joys which are temporal and perishing, to come into competition with them?' Surely there is nothing that belongs to time that should tempt us to run the risk of the sorrows of eternity, nor allure us to commit one sin against God, which is the fatal spring of such sorrows! Stand still, O sinner, and hearken to the voice of wisdom. Do the pleasures of sense, or the gaieties of sight, or the wealth or grandeurs of this life allure thee to make thy way boldly through any 'means' toward the possession of them, think with thyself, is it by offending this great and dreadful God? And wilt thou dare to take one step towards these dangerous and deceitful vanities, and risk thine immortal welfare in the pursuit? What a foolish bargain wilt thou make 'to gain the whole world' of short-lived perishing trifles, and 'to lose thy soul' in endless perdition? Mark viii. 36. Dare any of us venture an eternal state of torment to gain the flattering and delusive joy of a short hour, or a winter's day?

What are all the gratifications of flesh and sense!—What are all the swelling titles of honour amongst men! What are all the treasures of this perishing world! How short is their duration, and how short is the possession of them! All earthly felicities 'perish in the using,' and are no sooner enjoyed but are quickly lost again, or expire in the enjoyment: but if the ruin of a soul, and a lost heaven, be the price of them, how mad is the purchase, and how wretched is the purchaser?

Reflect. IV. 'How patiently should we bear all the labours, and fatigues, the pains and miseries of this mortal life, when we have any hope of our deliverance from the pains and sorrows of immortality?' As for our maladies

and sorrows here on earth, blessed be God they are not eternal; there are some intervals to relieve, and there is some period to finish them. When we ask a friend who is sick and in pain, "how fare you? I am in pain now, says he, but I hope I shall be easy anon: I am sick today, but I trust I shall be in health to-morrow." This is a sweet mitigation of the present uneasiness, and gives relief to the patient. But how dreadful and piercing would these accents be, if we should hear our friend make this answer to us, "I am all over in extreme pain and anguish, and I shall never, never be eased of it: I lie under exquisite torment of the flesh, and horror in my soul, and I shall forever feel this horror and this torment." Such is the case of the damned sinners in hell, and therefore their agonies are intolerable.

But if you have any comfortable prospect of the pardon of sin, and a well-grounded hope of eternal salvation through the blood of 'Christ,' and by the rules and promises of the gospel, all the temporal toils and plagues that can possibly stand between us and heaven should be despised and disregarded by us, and we should learn to triumph over them with the victorious songs of thankfulness and praise. Blessed be the name of our God, 'though he has smitten us' sorely, 'yet he has not given us over to' everlasting 'death.'

Let our thoughts ascend to the heavenly regions, and let us ask those who are arrived thither out of the land of temptation and conflict, out of these tabernacles of sin and sorrow; let us ask them what gave them so divine a courage, and so firm a patience, in the midst of all their trials? With one voice they will all make answer, it was the view of our deliverance from an eternal hell, and the hopes of obtaining salvation by 'Christ Jesus' with eternal glory; it is this that supported us under every burden, and bore us on with a spirit of faith and victory through every hardship on earth. It was for this we laboured, and suffered, and 'counted not life,' nor any of the blessings of it, 'dear to us,' nor any of the sorrows of it intolerable, that we might escape the everlasting sorrows of a future state, and enjoy the blessings of life eternal. And, O may every one of us 'be the followers of those who through' this 'faith and patience have obtained the promised' felicity! May we also make our way by the same motives, through the

floods and the fires of affliction and distress, to reach this everlasting heaven, and to escape everlasting burnings!

In order to confirm our patience, and to animate our zeal, let us survey the blessed example of St. 'Paul, who was reproached, who was buffeted, who was persecuted with stones, and whips, and scourges, and bore a thousand indignities, who was assaulted with endless strokes of injury and violence, and yet rejoiced in the midst of all his sufferings in the view of his eternal hope. The spirit of faith in the midst of all his sufferings taught him to sing this divine song, 'our light afflictions which are but for a moment, are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed,' 2 Cor. iv. 17. Rom. viii. 18. Nor are they worthy to be compared with that exceeding and eternal weight of vengeance, from which we are delivered by faith and patient obedience to the gospel of our Lord 'Jesus Christ.'

Reflect. V. If 'the miseries of hell are eternal, we can never have our deliverance from them made too secure.' If the danger of any mischief to which we might be exposed, were but slight, and the duration of it short, there might be possibly some excuse for our delay to escape it. But when it is total and irrevocable ruin to which we are liable every moment, while we continue in a state of sin, we should fly with all the wings of our souls, and never be at ease or quiet till we are got without the reach of danger, and settled in a place of safety, or on the rock of our salvation.

O could we but perceive a thousandth part of the horror that is contained in an eternal hell, an eternal banishment from the face and favour of God, and the eternal impressions of his anger, we should never give ourselves rest one moment, till we had returned to God by a sincere repentance, and were reconciled to him that made us: till we fled for refuge to the blood of Jesus, and to his sanctifying grace, which is the only hope that is set before us. We should never give ourselves leave to lie down, or awake in quiet, while we were destitute of a saving interest in the salvation of Christ, and had attained to some clear evidence of it, and a well-grounded hope.

Have we not sometimes felt the 'worm of conscience' begin to gnaw within us, and to prey upon our spirits after

the commission of some sin? And shall we not apply ourselves with all holy speed to the divine Physician, who can kill this gnawing worm within us, and can heal those sinful maladies that are breeding it? Have we not sometimes felt the threatenings of the wrath of God in his law, like a fire in our bones? With what infinite desire then, and what restless vehemence should we fly to the blood of Jesus our great sacrifice, which alone can quench the fiery indignation of God, and prevent it from growing up to an everlasting flame.

Had we upon our spirits such a sense of the terrors of the Lord in hell, as his threatenings represent, we should never be satisfied with such cold doubtful hopes of our deliverance from them, as thousands of nominal Christians are contented with; but we should make every needful and critical enquiry, whether our repentance were sincere, whether our faith in Christ were unfeigned, whether our hopes had a solid foundation in the divine promise. We should search every power of our souls, and examine our hearts through every corner, whether sin be mortified there, whether the christian virtues are formed within us, and the divine image is begun to be stamped upon our minds. We should be restless and impatient in our inward searches, whether we are made new creatures, whether we are born of God and become his children, and are secured by his gospel from this everlasting vengeance. The degree and the infinite duration of this misery should appoint the proportion of our zeal and solicitude to escape it.

A man who sees or feels his own house on fire under him, does not continue upon his bed of sloth, or sit amusing himself among the ornaments of his chamber, till the flames have broke through and seized him: but with huge outcries he seeks for help, and flees in haste for his life, wheresoever he finds a way. Such should be the language, and such the activity of sinful creatures, to escape the wrath to come; and such will be the outcries of sinners when they are thoroughly awakened; this language of every place, and of every hour will then be awakened, 'what shall I do to be saved? Whither shall I flee for refuge?' O blessed Jesus, receive me into thy protection, and be thou my deliverer.

Give me leave to repeat this sort of expostulation with lingering and delaying sinners, or with drowsy and for

mal Christians. If you would set yourselves often in the blaze of these everlasting burnings, you would never satisfy yourselves with such cold faint wishes, such lazy endeavours, such languid efforts of faith and repentance, to escape this fiery indignation that shall never be quenched nor would you content yourselves with dark and doubtful evidences of your interest in the love of God, and the grace of our Lord Jesus ; but you would be day and night busy with your own hearts in the most intimate and careful search after converting grace and living christianity: you would never be at rest till you felt the new nature working with power and bright evidence within you, that you might be able to say, "we know there is no condemnation belongs to us, but that we are passed from death unto life."

Let us proceed upon this subject, turning the discourse from ourselves to our friends, and say with what fervour of love, with what holy zeal and compassion should we labour to save our friends and all that are dear to us, from this eternal destruction? What words of fiery terror shall we choose to awaken those who slumber on the edge of endless burnings? What language of kind and tender passion shall we chuse to reach their hearts? What phrases of melting pity to hasten their escape from this precipice of burning ruin, or to pluck them as brands out of the fire before it becomes unquenchable? 'Knowing these terrors of the Lord,' with what vehemence of zeal should we try to persuade men, our fellow mortals, that they would not venture into the midst of these miseries, and beseech them in the name of Christ to be reconciled to God? This was the practice, and these the motives of the great Apostle, as he describes them at the latter end of the fifth chapter in his second epistle to the Corinthians.

O with what force of ardent and active compassion should ministers preach both the curses of the law, and the grace of the blessed gospel, to perishing sinners, and make haste to rescue their souls from this everlasting vengeance? With what warm and solicitous zeal should they lay hold of those poor thoughtless wretches who are madly indulging their lusts and follies, and thereby preparing themselves to become fit fuel for this eternal fire? They are forming themselves by their iniquities to become vessels of this everlasting indignation. Let us seize them by some kind and constraining words of love, some outcries

of compassion and fear, lest they rush into those flames which will never be quenched. Perhaps when they are summoned away from us by the stroke of death, they may leave us in the most uncomfortable sorrows for our neglect, while they are suffering the long endless punishment due to their own iniquities.

Reflect. VI. 'How unreasonable a thing is it for us ministers, who are charged and entrusted with the whole counsel of God for the salvation of men, to avoid the mention of these his eternal terrors in our sermons, and in our addresses to mortal creatures; creatures' who are daily preparing themselves for them by their sins, and are ready to plunge into the midst of them! Has not our blessed Saviour made frequent mention of them in his gospel, and set them in their dreadful array before his hearers? Has he not expressed them in their strongest terms, and spread them in their most frightful colours, and set them in their full and everlasting extent, before the sinners which attended his ministry? And did he ever give any hint that they should be understood in a milder sense? Have not the Apostles followed their Lord in the same dreadful display of the sharp and ever-during punishments of hell? And have they taught us to qualify these terrors by gentler interpretations of them? And have not such kind of discourses been abundantly blessed in the providence of God, both in ancient and later ages, to awaken and save multitudes of the souls of men?

How many holy and happy spirits are now rejoicing before God, and before the throne of his love, and encompassed with all the joys of immortality, who owe the beginnings of their repentance, and the first turn of their souls towards faith and salvation to such words of terror as these? How many of the saints on high have been first awakened from their deadly sleep in sin, by the ministrations of this eternal vengeance of God? How many have been affrighted out of their indolence at first by the discovery of these everlasting horrors of conscience and agonies of soul? The dread of the worm that never dies has affrighted their consciences from a course of sin: the fiery indignation which shall never be quenched has flashed in their bosoms from the lips of the preacher, and has set them all over trembling, and filled all their inward powers with dismay and anguish. Their tongue has broke

into loud and earnest enquiries, 'Who shall deliver me from this eternal death? How shall I escape this everlasting wrath to come?' And the spirit of God by degrees has led them to Jesus, and his atoning blood, his gospel, his righteousness, and his converting grace, as the only way of deliverance and salvation.

How unreasonable a thing is it for ministers in their preaching to soften these terrors of the Lord, to cut short these endless horrors and anguish, and to mitigate the miseries of hell and damnation, since even all that length and eternity in which Christ and his Apostles preached these terrors, have not been sufficient to reclaim mankind from their iniquities; but multitudes of them, in the face of all these threatenings, still persist in the broad way to destruction and death?

Can we possibly do any honour to the ministry of our blessed Lord, or is there any real service done to the souls of men by our fond and vain reasonings to shorten these sorrows, and put a period to these threatened torments? Will the blessed Jesus when he sits on the throne of judgment, give us thanks for running counter to the language of his own ministry, and for daring to contradict his denounced vengeance?

By the various expressions and representatives of this matter in scripture, in such solemn and dreadful language, must I not suppose that the blessed God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, designed and intended that mankind should believe the pains and punishments of hell will be eternal? Can I then be censured for endeavouring to establish and promote the awful doctrine which both God the Father and his Son intended should be believed, and by which they designed to guard both the law and the gospel? A doctrine which was left on record to deter sinners from the paths of sin and destruction, and to awaken the souls and consciences of men to repentance? On the other hand, can those teachers be approved of God or good men, whose evident design is to lead the world to disbelieve this solemn and terrible warning of the great God?

Let us proceed in these enquiries, and address ourselves to those wicked and miserable creatures, who are actually suffering this divine vengeance. Let us ask them, how they approve of this sort of preaching which withholds from the eyes, and ears, and consciences of men, the most

dreadful circumstance of these horrors? Will any of the damned wretches of hell thank us for hiding so dreadful a part of these miseries from them? Will they bless us for lessening the threatened curses and indignation of God? "No, says the condemned wretch, those preachers are worthy of my curses and not my thanks, who abated these terrors of the Lord, and shortened his threatened punishment; for they persuaded me to hope there would be an end of my misery, and thereby tempted me to venture upon those sins which I should have renounced with abomination, had I believed the words of God, and these everlasting torments. O cursed and cruel preachers, who, by softening and curtailing the sentence of eternal misery, gave a sort of licence to my wickedness, and broke one of the strongest bars that restrained me from sinning! It is by this sort of flattery they paved my way down to hell, and have brought me into this prison, this eternal anguish, whence there is no release." *

Say, ye who preach that the gates of hell shall one day be opened to let out the prisoners, ye who tell sinners there is a time of release for them, say, do ye expect to fright them out of their sins by lessening their fear of God and his wrath to come? Do ye hope to bring obstinate and impenitent rebels to a more speedy remorse for sin, and to begin a life of holiness, by persuading them that these terrors of God shall have an end? Can ye imagine that such vain tidings, such soothing flattery, will ever melt them to repentance and love, when all the grace of the gospel, mingled with the blood and tears of the Son of God will not do it? Would not this manner of preaching rather encourage them to run on still in their rebellions, and make them more regardless of their highest interest? Would it not tempt them to give a loose to their vilest inclinations, and all the flagrant and abominable enormities of their own heart, when they shall be told that

* Some of the ancients have called those preachers who shorten the pains of hell, the merciful or compassionate doctors: and Dr. T. Burnet calls those merciless or uncompassionate, who preach the eternity of it. But I think it will appear one day, that those are truly the compassionate writers and teachers, who most effectually affright and prevent men from sin and damnation; and those who have given wicked men hope of their release from hell, will be in danger of being charged with smoothing their way to this misery, by softening the terrors of it.—Watts.

these punishments, which the Bible calls everlasting, shall one day come to an end?

Besides, I believe it has been observed in every age, that the fears of this 'worm which never dies,' and this eternal 'fire which shall never be quenched,' have been made abundantly useful in the providence of God to lay a powerful restraint on the unruly vices of some sinners, who have never been awakened and drawn into saving penitence, or reclaimed to a life of sincere holiness. And, if the restraint of this terror were taken away, how much more would all iniquity abound among those who have no inward principle of goodness?

Let us proceed then to preach the same terror which the blessed Jesus thought not unworthy of his ministry; and may the providence and the grace of God give success to our labours, both for the restraining the extravagant vices of the wicked, for the saving conversion of many sinners, and for a guard and restraint to the young and wavering Christians.*

Notwithstanding all the express language of scripture on our side of the question, and all our arguments drawn from it; yet there are some of the reasoners and the disputers of this world, who will still suppose that it is more for the honour of God, and for the glory of our blessed Saviour, for ministers to dwell always upon the promises

* The late Dr. Thomas Burnet, in his Latin treatise of the 'state of the dead, and those who rise again,' opposes the doctrine of the eternity of future punishments, and shews who of the ancient fathers seem to be of the same opinion with him. But he tells us, that these ancient fathers, when they treated of this subject, often gave the same advice to others, which he himself gives in these words: "Whatsoever you determine within yourself, and in your own breast, concerning these punishments, whether they are eternal or no, yet you ought to use the common doctrine and the common language when you preach or speak to the people, especially those of the lower rank, who are ready to run headlong into vice, and are to be restrained from evil only by the fear of punishment. And even among good christians there are infants to be nourished with milk; nor is their diet to be rashly changed, lest through intemperance they fall into diseases."

And he adds in the margin, "whosoever shall translate these sentiments into our mother tongue, I shall think it was done with an evil design and to bad purpose." So that if this were a true doctrine, yet the learned author agrees, that neither the holy writers of the Bible, nor the fathers, think it proper that the bulk of the people should know it. But if it should not be translated, I would ask, why did the author write it, and leave it to be published? Did he suppose all men and boys, who understood Latin, to be sufficiently guarded against the abuse of such an opinion?—Watts.

of the new covenant, and the riches of the grace of Christ, and the overflowing measures of the love of God, in order to save sinful men. "Surely, say they, preachers have tried long enough what the words of terror will do; let us now allure sinful men to be reconciled to God by a ministry of universal love and grace; and let us see whether the boundless compassions of God, in putting a final period to the miseries of his guilty creatures after a certain number of years, will not draw sinners with a sweeter violence to the love and obedience of their Maker, than all this doctrine of severity and terror."

In the first place, I answer, that surely Jesus himself, who is the prime minister of his Father's kingdom, and the divinest messenger of his love, knew better than we do, how to pay the highest honour to his heavenly Father, and to display his own grace. Surely he was well acquainted with the best way to begin with sinners, in order to their reconciliation to God, and knew also the most effectual avenues to the consciences of sinful creatures, incomparably beyond what any of us can pretend to. Had he not as tender a sense of the honour of his Father's mercy, as warm a zeal for the glory of his own grace and gospel, and as wise and melting a compassion for the souls of men as the best of us can boast of? And yet he thought it proper to lay the foundation of his own, and his Apostles, ministrations of grace, in this language of terror, in these threatenings of eternal punishment. And in the course of his providence throughout all ages, he has, in some measure, made this doctrine successful to recover souls from the snares of the devil, and to enlarge his own heavenly kingdom.

But I answer further, it must be granted that the tempers of men are various, and it is possible that some may be of so ingenuous and refined a disposition, that the words of love and grace, without any terror, might reach their hearts, and through the influences of heaven, touch them effectually: But as for the bulk of mankind, while they continue in their sins, daily experience conviceth us that they are best awakened by the terrors of the Lord, by representations of the gnawing 'worm which never dies,' and the 'fire which shall not be quenched.' I never knew but one person in the whole course of my ministry, who acknowledged that the first motions of re-

ligion in their own heart arose from a sense of the goodness of God, and that they were gently and sweetly led at first to this enquiry, 'What shall I render to the Lord who hath dealt so bountifully with me?' But I think all besides, who have come within my notice, have rather been first awakened, by the passion of fear, to flee from the wrath to come.

If, therefore, we will practice, according to the example of Jesus, the greatest and the wisest Prophet of his church, and his holy Apostles, and the best of preachers in all ages who have followed him, if we would obey the dictates of long experience, and our best observations on the methods of converting grace, I think we must proceed to denounce these eternal terrors of the Lord against the transgressors of his law, and the despisers of his gospel. This seems to be the appointed and most effectual way to rouse their consciences to seek a deliverance from the curses of the law, which carry in them everlasting punishment. This appears to be the first spring of religion in sinful men, and the first motive to receive the glad tidings of salvation which are displayed in the New Testament. This spurs on their passions to escape the vengeance of God, by fleeing to his gospel, where there is rich and abundant grace to encourage the hope of rebellious creatures in their returns to God by Jesus Christ the Saviour. To Jesus, who is the awful messenger of his father's terrors, and the prime minister of his love, be glory and honour to everlasting ages. Amen.

AN ESSAY

TOWARD THE PROOF OF A SEPARATE STATE OF SOULS BETWEEN DEATH AND THE RESURRECTION.

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§ I. *The introduction or proposal of the question, with a distinction of the persons who oppose it.*

It is confessed that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead at the last day, and the everlasting joys, and the eternal sorrows, that shall succeed it, as they are described in the New Testament, are a very awful sanction to the gospel of Christ, and carry in them such principles of hope and terror as should effectually discourage vice and irreligion, and become a powerful attractive to the practice of faith and love, and universal holiness.

But so corrupt and perverse are the inclinations of men in this fallen and degenerate world, and their passions are so much impressed and moved by things that are present or just at hand, that the joys of heaven, and the sorrows of hell, when set far beyond death and the grave at some vast unknown distance of time, would have but too little influence on their hearts and lives. And though these solemn and important events are never so certain in themselves, yet being looked upon as things a great way off, make too feeble an impression on the conscience, and their distance is much abused to give an indulgence to present sensualities. For this we have the testimony of our blessed Saviour himself, Matt. xxiv. 48, "The evil servant says, my Lord delays his coming; then he begins to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken." And Solomon teaches us the same truth, Eccles. viii. 11, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." And even the good servants in this imperfect state, the sons of virtue and piety, may be too much allured to indulge sinful negligence,

and yield to temptations too easily when the terrors of another world are set so far off, and their hope of happiness is delayed so long. It is granted, indeed, that this sort of reasoning is very unjust; but so foolish are our natures, that we are too ready to take up with it, and to grow more remiss in the cause of religion.

Whereas, if it can be made to appear from the word of God, that, at the moment of death, the soul enters into an unchangeable state, according to its character and conduct here on earth, and that the recompences of vice and virtue, are, in some measure, to begin immediately upon the end of our state of trial; and if, besides all this, there be a glorious and a dreadful resurrection to be expected, with eternal pain or eternal pleasure both for soul and body, and that in a more intense degree, when the theatre of this world is shut up, and Christ Jesus appears to pronounce his public judgment on the world, then all those little subterfuges are precluded, which mankind would form to themselves from the unknown distance of the day of recompence. Virtue will have a nearer and stronger guard placed about it, and piety will be attended with superior motives, if its initial rewards are near at hand, and shall commence as soon as this life expires; and the vicious and profane will be more effectually affrighted, if the hour of death must immediately consign them to a state of perpetual sorrows and bitter anguish of conscience, without hope, and with a fearful expectation of yet greater sorrows and anguish.

I know what the opposers of the Separate State reply here, viz. That the whole time from death to the resurrection is but as the sleep of a night, and the dead shall awake out of their graves, utterly ignorant and insensible of the long distance of time that hath past since their death. One year or one thousand years will be the same thing to them; and therefore, they should be as careful to prepare for the day of judgment, and the rewards that attend it, as they are for their entrance into the Separate State at death, if there were any such state to receive them.

I grant, men should be so in reason and justice: but such is the weakness and folly of our natures, that men will not be so much influenced nor alarmed by distant prospects, nor so solicitous to prepare for an event which they suppose to be so very far off, as they would for the same

event, if it commences as soon as ever this mortal life expires. The vicious man will indulge his sensualities, and lie down to sleep in death with this comfort, 'I shall take my rest here for a hundred or a thousand years, and perhaps, in all that space, my offences may be forgotten, or something may happen that I may escape: or, let the worst come that can come, I shall have a long sweet nap before my sorrows begin. Thus the force of divine terrors are greatly enervated by this delay of punishment.

I will not undertake to determine, when the soul is dismissed from the body, whether there be any explicit divine sentence passed concerning its eternal state of happiness or misery, according to its works in this life; or whether the pain or pleasure that belongs to the State be not chiefly such as arises by natural consequence from a life of sin or a life of holiness, and as being under the power of an approving or a condemning conscience. But, it seems to me more probable, that since "the spirit returns to God that gave it, to God the Judge of all," with whom "the spirits of the just made perfect" dwell, and, since the spirit of a Christian, when "absent from the body, is present with the Lord," i. e. Christ, I am more inclined to think that there is some sort of judicial determination of this important point, either by God himself, or by Jesus Christ, into whose hands "he has committed all judgment." Heb. ix. 27. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" whether immediate or more distant, is not here expressly declared, though the immediate connection of the words hardly gives room for seventeen hundred years to intervene. But, if the solemn formalities of a judgment be delayed, yet the conscience of a separate spirit, reflecting on a holy or a sinful life, is sufficient to begin a heaven or a hell immediately after death.

Amongst those who delay the season of recompence till the resurrection, there are some who suppose the soul to exist still as a distinct being from the body, but to pass the whole interval of time in a state of stupor or sleep, being altogether unconscious and unactive. Others again imagine, that the soul itself has not a sufficient distinction from the body to give it any proper existence when the body dies; but that its existence shall be renewed at the resurrection of the body, and then be made the subject of joy or pain, according to its behaviour in this mortal state.

I think there might be an effectual argument against each of these opinions raised from the principles of philosophy: I shall just give a hint of them, and then proceed to search what Scripture has revealed in this matter, which is of much greater importance to us, and will have a more powerful influence on the minds of Christians.

I. Some imagine the soul of man to be his blood or his breath, or a sort of vital flame, or refined air or vapour, or the composition and motion of the fluids and solids in the animal body. This they suppose to be the spring or principle of his intellectual life, and of all his thoughts and consciousness, as well as of his animal life. And though this soul of man dies together with the body, and has no manner of separate existence or consciousness, yet when his body is raised from the grave, they suppose this principle of consciousness is renewed again, and intellectual life is given him at the resurrection as well as a new corporeal life.

But it should be considered, that this conscious or thinking principle having lost its existence for a season, it will be quite a new thing, or another creature at the resurrection; and the man will be properly another person, another self, another I or he: and such a new conscious principle or person cannot properly be rewarded or punished for personal virtues or vices of which itself cannot be conscious by any power of memory or reflection, and which were transacted in this mortal state by another distinct principle of consciousness. For if the conscious principle itself, or the thinking being has ceased to exist, it is impossible that it should retain any memory of former actions, since itself began to be but in the moment of the resurrection. The doctrine of rewarding or punishing the same soul or intelligent nature which did good or evil in this life, necessarily requires that the same soul or intelligent nature should have a continued and uninterrupted existence, that so the same conscious being which did good or evil may be rewarded or punished.

II. Those who suppose the soul of man to have a real distinct existence when the body dies, but only to fall into a state of slumber without consciousness or activity, must, I think, suppose this soul to be material, i. e. an extended and solid substance.

If they suppose it to be inextended, or to have no parts

or quantity, I confess I have no manner of idea of the existence or possibility of such an inextended being, without consciousness or active power ; nor do they pretend to have any such idea as I ever heard, and therefore they generally grant it to be extended.

But if they imagine the soul to be extended, it must either have something more of solidity or density than mere empty space, or it must be quite as unsolid and thin as space itself. Let us consider both these.

If it be as thin and subtle as mere empty space, yet while it is active and conscious, I own it must have a proper existence ; but if it once begin to sleep and drop all consciousness and activity, I have no other idea of it, but the same which I have of empty space; and that I conceive to be mere nothing, though it impose upon us with the appearance of some sort of properties.

If they allow the soul to have any the least degree of density above what belongs to empty space, this is solidity in the philosophic sense of the word, and then it is solid extension, which I call matter : and a material being may indeed be laid asleep, i. e. it may cease to have any motion in its parts; but motion is not consciousness : and how either solid or unsolid extension, either space or matter, can have any consciousness or thought belonging to any part of it, or spread through the whole of it, I know not ; or what any sort of extension can do toward thought or consciousness, I confess I understand not; nor can I frame any more an idea of it, than I can of a blue motion or a sweet smelling sound, or of fire or air or water reasoning or rejoicing : and I do not affect to speak of things or words, when I can form no correspondent ideas of what is spoken.

So far as I can judge, the soul of man in its own nature, is nothing else but a conscious and active principle, subsisting by itself, made after the image of God, who is all conscious activity ; and it is still the same being, whether it be united to an animal body, or separated from it. If the body die, the soul still exists an active and conscious power or principle, or being ; and if it ceases to be conscious and active, I think it ceases to be ; for I have no conception of what remains.

Now, if the conscious principle continue conscious after death, it will not be in a mere conscious indolence: the

good man and the wicked will not have the same indolent existence. Virtue or vice, in the very temper of this being when absent from matter or body, will become a pleasure or a pain to the conscience of a separate spirit.

I am well aware that this is a subject which has employed the thoughts of many philosophers, and I do but just intimate my own sentiments without presuming to judge for others. But the defence or refutation of arguments on this subject, would draw me into a field of philosophical discourse, which is very foreign to my present purpose: and whether this reasoning stand or fall, it will have but very little influence on this controversy with the generality of Christians, because it is a thing rather to be determined by the revelation of the word of God. I therefore drop this argument at once, and apply myself immediately to consider the proofs that may be drawn from Scripture for the soul's existence in a Separate State after death, and before the resurrection.

§ II. *Probable arguments for the Separate State.*

There are several places of Scripture in the Old Testament, as well as in the New, which may be most naturally and properly construed to signify the existence of the soul in a Separate State after the body is dead; but since they do not carry with them such plain evidence, or forcible proof, and may possibly be interpreted to another sense, I shall not long insist upon them: however it may not be amiss just to mention a few of them, and pass away.

Psal. lxxiii. 24, 26. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory: my flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." In these verses 'receiving to glory' seems immediately to follow a guidance through this world; and when 'the flesh and heart' of the Psalmist should 'fail him' in death, God continued to be his 'portion for ever,' God would receive him to himself as such a portion, and thereby he gave strength or 'courage to his heart' even in a dying hour. It would be a very odd and unnatural exposition of this text to interpret it only of the resurrection, thus, "Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel through this life, and after the long interval of some thousand years thou wilt receive me to glory."

Eccles. xii. 7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth

as it was, and the spirit to God that gave it." It is confessed the word spirit in the Hebrew is the same with breath, and is represented in some places of Scripture as the spring of animal life to the body: yet it is evident in many other places, the word spirit signifies the conscious principle in man, or the intelligent being, which knows and reasons, perceives and acts. The Scripture speaks of being "grieved in spirit," Isa. liv. 6; of "rejoicing in spirit," Luke x. 21; "the spirit of a man knoweth the things of a man," 1 Cor. ii. 11; "there is a spirit in man," i. e. a principle of understanding, Job xxxii. 8; and 'this spirit' both of the wicked and the righteous at death "returns to God," Eccl. xii. 7, to God who (as I hinted before) is the 'Judge of all' in the world of spirits, probably to be further determined and disposed of, as to its state of reward or punishment.

Isa. lvii. 2, "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come, he shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." The soul of every one that walketh uprightly shall at death enter into a state of peace while their body rests in the bed of dust.

Luke ix. 30, 31, "And behold there talked with him, (i. e. with Jesus,) two men which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." I grant it possible that these might be but mere visions which appeared to our blessed Saviour and his apostles: but it is a much more natural and obvious interpretation to suppose that the spirits of these two great men whereof one was the institutor, and the other the reformer of the Jewish church, did really appear to Christ, who was the reformer of the world, and the institutor of the Christian church, and converse with him about the important event of his death and his return to heaven. Perhaps the spirit of Elijah had his heavenly body with him there, since he never died, but was carried alive to heaven; but Moses gave up his soul at the call of God when no man was near him, and his body was buried by God himself, (see 2 Kings ii. 11. and Deut. xxxiv. 1, 5, 6,) and his spirit was probably made visible only by an assumed vehicle for that purpose.

John v. 24, "Whoso heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life; is passed from death to life." John vi. 47, 50, 51, "This is the bread

which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." John xi. 26, "Whoso liveth and believeth in me, shall never die," to which may be added the words of Christ to the woman of Samaria, John iv. 14, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." 1 John v. 12, "He that hath the Son hath life," &c. The argument I draw from these Scriptures in this. It is hardly to be supposed that our Saviour in this gospel, and John in his first epistle imitating him, should speak such strong language concerning eternal life, actually given to and possessed by the believers of that day, if there must be an interruption of it by total death or sleep both of soul and body for almost two thousand years, i. e. till the resurrection.

Acts vii. 59, "And they stoned Stephen calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Those who deny a Separate State, suppose that Stephen here commits his spirit, or principle of human life, into the hands or care of Christ (because the life of a saint is said to be "hid with Christ in God," Colos. iii. 3, 4,) that he might restore it at the resurrection, and raise him to life again. But I think this is an unnatural force put upon these words, contrary to their most obvious meaning, if we consider the context: for Stephen here had a vision of the "Son of man, (or Christ Jesus,) standing on the right hand of God, and the glory of God near him;" see ver. 55, 56. Whereupon Stephen being conscious of the existence of Christ in that glorious state, desired that he would receive his spirit, and take it to dwell with him in his Father's house; not to lie and sleep in heaven, for "there is no night there," but to behold the glory of Christ according to the many promises that Christ had made to his disciples, that he "would go and prepare a place for them in his Father's house," and that they should be "with him there to behold his glory," John xiv, and xvii, which I shall have occasion to speak of afterward.

Rom. viii. 10, 11. "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness," i. e. if Christ dwell in you by the sanctifying influences of his Spirit, it is true indeed, your body is mortal and must die, because it is doomed to death from the fall of Adam on the account of sin, and because sinful

principles still dwell in this fleshly body ; but your soul or spirit is life, or (as some copies read ζη instead of ζωη) your spirit lives when the body is dead, and enjoys a life of happiness, because of the righteousness imputed to you, i. e. "your justification unto life," Rom. v. 17, 18. 21. I know there are several other ways of construing the words of this verse by metaphors ; but the plain and most natural antithesis which appears here between the death of the body of a saint because of sin or guilt, and the continuance of the spirit or soul in a life of peace because of justification or righteousness, and that even when the body is dead, gives a pretty clear proof that this is the sense of the apostle. This is also further confirmed by the next verse, which promises the resurrection of the dead body in due time. "If the Spirit of him that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead," i. e. God the Father, "shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." The spirit or soul of the saint lives without dying, because of its pardon of sin and justification and sanctification, in the 10th verse ; and the body (not the spirit or soul) shall be quickened or raised to life again, by the blessed Spirit of God which dwells in the saints, ver. 11.

2 Cor. v. 1, 2, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." Ver. 4, "We in this tabernacle groan being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." It is evident that this 'house from heaven,' this 'building of God,' is something which is like the clothing of a soul divested of this 'earthly tabernacle,' ver. 1, 2, or it is the clothing of the whole person, body and soul, which would abrogate the state of mortality, and 'swallow it up in life,' ver. 4. For though in ver. 4, the apostle supposes that the soul doth not desire the death of the body, or that itself should be unclothed, and therefore he would rather choose to have this state of blessed immortality superinduced on his body and soul at once without dying, yet in the first verse he plainly means such a house in or from heaven, or such a clothing which may come upon the soul immediately as soon

as the 'earthly house' or 'tabernacle of his body is dissolved.' And how dubious soever this may appear to those who read the chapter only thus far, yet the 8th verse, which supposes good men to be 'present with Christ' when 'absent from the body,' determines the sense of it as I have explained it; of which hereafter.

Perhaps it is hard to determine, whether this superinduced clothing be like the Shechinah or visible glory in which Christ, Moses, and Elias, appeared at the transfiguration, and which some suppose to have belonged to Adam in innocency; or whether it signify only 'a state of happy immortality,' superinduced or brought in upon the departing soul at death, or upon the soul, and body united as in this life, and with which those saints shall be clothed, who are "found alive at the coming of Christ," according to 1 Cor. xv. 52, 53, 54, which will not kill the body, but swallow up its mortal state in immortal life.

Let this matter, I say, be determined either way, yet the great point seems to be evident, even beyond probability, that there is a conscious being spoken of, which is very distinct from its tabernacle, or house, or clothing, and which exists still, whatever its clothing or its dwelling be, or whether it be put off, or put on; and that, when the earthly house or vessel is dissolved or put of, the heavenly house or clothing is ready at hand to be put on immediately, to render the soul of the Christian fit to be present with the Lord.

2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth; how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words." I grant this ecstacy of the apostle does not actually shew the existence of a Separate State after death till the resurrection; yet it plainly manifests St. Paul's belief, that there might be such a state, and that the soul might be separated from the body, and exist and think, and know, and act, in paradise, in a state of separation, and hear, and perhaps converse in the unspeakable language of that world, while it was 'absent from the body.'

And, as I acknowledge I am one of those persons who do not believe that the intellectual spirit or mind of man is the proper principle of animal life to the body, but that it is another distinct conscious being, that generally uses the body as an habitation, engine, or instrument, while its animal life remains; so I am of opinion, it is a possible

thing for the intellectual spirit, in a miraculous manner, by the special order of God, to act in a state of separation without the death of the animal body, since the life of the body depends upon breath and air, and the regular temper and motion of the solids and fluids, of which it is composed.* And St. Paul seems here to be of the same mind, by his doubting whether his spirit was 'in the body or out of the body,' whilst it was 'rapt into the third heaven' and enjoyed this vision, his body being yet alive.

Phil. i. 21, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." The apostle, whilst he was here upon earth, spent his life in the service of Christ, and enjoyed many glorious communications from him. "For him to live was Christ." And, on this account, he was contented to continue here in life longer: yet he is well satisfied that death would be an advantage or gain to him. Now we can hardly imagine what gain it would be for St. Paul to die, if his soul immediately went to sleep and became unactive and unconscious, while his body lay in the grave, and neither soul nor body could do any service for Christ, or receive any communications from him, till the great rising-day. This text seems to carry the argument above a mere probability.

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* It would be thought, perhaps, a little foreign to my present purpose, if I should stay here, to prove that it is not the conscious principle in man that gives or maintains the animal life of his body. It is granted, that, according to the course of nature, and the general appointment of God therein, this conscious principle or spirit continues its communications with the body, while the body has animal life, or is capable of its natural motions, and able to obey the volition of the spirit; and, on this account, the 'union of the rational spirit to the body,' and 'the animal life of the body,' are often represented as one and the same thing.

But, if we enter into a philosophical consideration of things, we should remember that animals of every kind in earth, air, and sea, and even the minutest insects which swarm in millions, and worlds of them, which are invisible to the naked eye, have all an animal life, but no such conscious or thinking principle as is in man: and why may not the body of man have the same sort of animal life quite distinct from the conscious spirit?

Besides, if this conscious principle give life to the body, medicines and physicians whose power reaches only to rectify the disordered solids or fluids of the body, would not be so necessary to preserve life, as an orator to persuade the spirit to continue in the body and preserve its life. And accordingly, we read of foreign ignorant nations, where the kindred persuade the dying person to live and tarry with them, and not to forsake them; and, when the person is dead, they mourn and reprove him, 'Why were you so unkind to leave and forsake us?' and indeed this conduct of those poor savages is a very natural inference from their supposition of the intelligent spirit giving animal life to the body.—Watts.

1 Thess. iv. 14, "For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." The most natural and evident sense of these words is this, that when the man Jesus Christ (in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead) shall descend from heaven, in order to raise the dead bodies of those that died or went to sleep in the faith of Christ, God dwelling in him, will bring with him the souls of his saints who were in paradise, down to earth to be reunited to their bodies when Jesus raises them from the dead, of which the apostle speaks in the 6th verse: this, I say, is the most natural and obvious sense; other paraphrases of the words seem strained and unnatural.

1 Thess. v. 10, "Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." Sleep is the death of good men, in the language of the apostle, in chap. iv. 13, 14, 15, and sleep in this verse, can neither signify natural sleep, as ver. 7, nor spiritual sloth, as ver. 6, therefore it must signify death here. Now, they who sleep in Christ, in this sense, do still live together with him in their souls, and shall live with him in their bodies also, when raised from the dead. This exposition arises near to a certainty of evidence.

1 Pet. iii. 18, 19, 20, "Christ was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." I confess this is a text that has much puzzled interpreters, in what sense Christ may be said "to go and preach" to those ancient rebels who were destroyed by the flood: whether he did it by his spirit working in Noah the "preacher of righteousness" in those days; or whether, in the three days in which the body of Christ lay dead, his soul visited the spirits of those rebels in their separate state of imprisonment, on which some ground the notion of his descent into hell. But, let this be determined as it will, * the most clear and easy sense of the apostle, when he speaks of the "spirits in prison," is, that the souls of those rebels, after their bodies were destroyed by the flood, were reserved in prison for some special and future design. And this is very

* See Note, page 100, *supra*.

parallel to the present circumstances of fallen angels in Jude ver. 4, "The angels that kept not their first estate, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day :" and why may not the spirits of men be as well kept in such a prison as angelic spirits?

Jude ver. 7, 'Sodom and Gomorrah are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.' It is evident that the material fire which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah was not eternal, for a great lake of water quickly overflowed and now covers all that plain where the fire was kindled, which burnt down those cities. It is manifest also, that, the day of resurrection and future punishment being not yet come, they do not, at this time, suffer the vengeance of eternal fire in their bodies. Nor can this verse, I think, be well explained to make Sodom and Gomorrah an example to deter present sinners from uncleanness, but by allowing that the spirits of those lewd persons are now suffering a degree of vengeance or punishment from the justice of God, which is compared to that fire whereby their cities and their bodies were burnt: and which vengeance, at the last great day, shall continue their punishment, and pronounce it eternal, or kindle material fire which shall never be quenched.

The last text I shall mention, is Rev. vi. 9, "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." I confess this is a book of visions, and this place, amongst others, might be explained as a mere vision of the apostle, if there were no other text which confirmed the doctrine of a Separate State. But since I think there are some solid proofs of it in other parts of the New Testament, I know not why this may not be explained, at least something nearer to the literal sense of it than those will allow, who suppose the soul to sleep from death to the resurrection. Why may not the spirits of the martyrs, which are now with God, pray him to hasten the accomplishment of his promises made to his church, and the day of vengeance upon his irreconcileable enemies?

§ III. Some firmer or more evident proofs of a Separate State.

I come now to consider those texts which do more expressly and certainly discover the Separate State, and

which, I think, cannot, with any tolerable appearance of reason, be turned aside from their plain and obvious intention, to reveal and declare that there is a Separate State of souls. And such, in my opinion, are these that follow.

I. *Text*, Matth. x. 28, 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.' Every common reader, as well as every man of learning who reads this text with a sincere mind and without prejudice, I think, will acknowledge at least, that the most obvious and easy sense of the words, implies, that there is a soul in man which men cannot kill, even though they kill the body.

It is to very little purpose for writers to say, that the Greek word ψυχη which we translate *soul* here, doth in other places of Scripture, and even in the 39th verse of this very chapter, signify life, and consequently here it may also signify the animal life or person of the man; for it is manifest, that in this place it must signify some immortal principle in man that cannot die; whereas when the body is killed, the animal life dies too, and does not exist till the body is raised again: but the soul is a principle in this place which men cannot kill even though they destroy the life of the body: and whatsoever other senses the word ψυχη may obtain in other texts, that cannot preclude such a sense of it in this text, as is most usual in itself, and which the context makes necessary in this place.

Nor will it avail the supporters of the mortality of the soul to say that this scripture means only that 'men cannot kill the soul for ever,' so that it shall for ever perish and have no future life hereafter by a resurrection: for in this sense men cannot 'kill the body,' so that it shall never revive or rise again: but here is a plain distinction in the text, that the body may be killed, but the soul cannot.

And I think this Scripture proves also, that though the body may be laid to sleep in the grave, yet the soul cannot be laid to sleep; for the substance of the body still exists, and is not utterly destroyed by killing it, but only 'laid to sleep' for a time, as the Scripture often describes death: but the soul cannot be thus laid to sleep for a time, with its substance still existing, for that would be to

have no pre-eminence above the body, which is contrary to this assertion of our Saviour.

II. Luke xvi. 22, &c. "The beggar died and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, &c. and send Lazarus, ver. 27, to my father's house that he may testify to my brethren, lest they come also into this place of torment." I grant that this account of the rich man and the beggar is but a parable, and yet it may prove the existence of the rich man's soul in a place of torment before the resurrection of the body; 1. Because the existence of souls in a Separate State, whilst other men dwell here on earth, is the very foundation of the whole parable, and runs through the whole of it. The poor man died and his soul was in paradise. The rich man's dead body was buried and his soul was in hell, while his five brethren were here on earth in a state of probation, and would not hearken to 'Moses and the prophets.'

2. Because the very design of the parable is to shew, that a ghost sent from the other world, whether heaven or hell, to wicked men who are here in a state of trial, will not be sufficient to convert them to holiness, if they reject the means of grace and the ministers of the word. The very design of our Saviour seems to be lost, if there be no souls existing in a Separate State. A ghost sent from the other world could never be supposed to have any influence to convert sinners in this world, even in a parable, if there were no such things as ghosts there. The rich man's five brethren could have no motive to hearken to a ghost pretending to come from heaven or hell, if there were no such thing as ghosts or separate souls either happy or miserable. Now surely, if parables can prove any thing at all, they must prove those propositions which are both the foundation and the design of the whole parable.

3. I might add yet further, that it is very strange that our Saviour should so particularly speak of angels carrying the soul of a man, whose body was just dead, into heaven or paradise, which he calls 'Abraham's bosom,' if there were no such state or place as a heaven for separate souls; if Abraham's soul had no residence there,

no existence in that state ; if angels had never any thing to do in such an office. What would the Jews have said or thought of a prophet come from God, who had taught his doctrines to the people in such parables as had scarce any sort of foundation in the reality or nature of things.

But you will say the Jews had such an opinion current among them, though it was a very false one, and that this was enough to support a parable. I answer, what could Christ (who is truth itself) have said more or plainer to confirm the Jews in this gross error of a Separate State of souls, than to form a parable which supposes this doctrine in the very design and moral of it, as well as in the foundation and matter of it ?

III. Luke xx. 37, 38, "Now that the dead are raised even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ; for he is not a God of the dead but of the living; for all live unto him." Some learned men suppose that the controversy between Christ and the Sadducees in this place was about the *anastasis*, which implies the whole state of existence after death, including both the Separate State and the resurrection, because the Sadducees denied both these at once, and believed that death finished the whole existence of the man. "They denied angels and spirits," Acts xxiii. 8, i. e. separate souls of men, and thought the rewards and punishments mentioned in Scripture related only to this life. Upon this account they suppose our Saviour's design is to prove the existence of persons or spirits in the Separate State as much as the resurrection of the body.

And when he says, that the Lord or Jehovah is described as the 'God of Abraham,' &c. it supposes Abraham at the same time to have actually some life and existence in some state or other, for "God is not a God of the dead but of the living," for all that are dead and gone out of this world still live unto God, i. e. they have a present life in the invisible world of spirits as God is an invisible Spirit, as well as they expect a resurrection of their body in due time.

How could God in the days of Moses be called actually "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," who were long since dead, if there was no sense in which they were now alive to God, since our Saviour declares

God is properly "the God only of the living, and not of the dead?" This part of the argument holds good in whatsoever sense you construe the whole debate, and by whatsoever medium or connection you prove the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; and this is obvious to the honest and unlearned reader, as well as to the men of learning.

IV. Luke xxiii. 42, 43, "And he (that is, the penitent thief upon the cross) said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom: and Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The thief upon the cross believed that Christ would enter into paradise which he supposed to be Christ's kingdom, when he departed from 'this world' which was 'not his kingdom;' and this he believed partly according to the common sentiment of the Jews concerning good men at their death, as well as it is agreeable to our Saviour's own expressions to God, John xvii. 11 "Holy Father, I am no more in the world and I am come unto thee:" or as he had said to his disciples, John xvi. 28, "I leave the world and go to the Father."

And according to these expressions, Luke, xxiii. 46, Christ dies with these words on his lips, "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit." Our Saviour taking notice of the repentance of the thief, acknowledging his own guilt, thus, "we are justly under this condemnation and receive the due reward of our deeds;" and taking notice also of his faith in the Messiah, as a king whose "kingdom was not of this world," when he prayed, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom:" Christ, I say, taking notice of both these, answers him with a promise of much grace, "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

The use of the word paradise in Scripture, and among ancient writers Jewish and Christian, is to signify the 'happiness of holy souls in a Separate State;' and our Saviour entering into that state at his death declared to the dying penitent, that he should be with him there immediately. It is certain that by the word paradise St. Paul means the place of happy spirits, into which he was transported, 2 Cor. xii. 4. And this sense is very accommodate and proper to this expression of our Saviour and to the prayer of the penitent thief, and it is as

suitable to the design of Christ in his epistle to the church of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 7, "the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God," which are the only three places where the New Testament uses this word.

I know there have been great pains taken to shew that the stops should be altered, and the comma should be placed after the word to-day, thus 'I say unto thee to-day, thou shalt be with me in paradise,' i. e. some time or other hereafter. As though Christ meant no more than this, viz. 'Thou askest me to remember thee when I come into my kingdom : and I declare unto thee truly this very day, that some long time hereafter thou shalt be with me in happiness at thy resurrection, when my kingdom shall be just at an end and I shall give it all up to the Father,' as in 1 Cor. xv. 24. Can any one imagine this to be the meaning of our blessed Saviour in answer to this prayer of the dying penitent? I know also there are other laborious criticisms to represent these words (to-day) in other places of Scripture as referring to some distant time, and not to mean that very day of twenty-four hours : but rather than enter into a long and critical debate upon all these texts, I will venture to trust the sense of it in this place with any sincere and unlearned reader.

But if we consult the learned Dr. Whitby, he will tell us, that it was a familiar phrase of the Jews to say, on a just man's dying, 'to day shall he sit in the bosom of Abraham :' and it was their opinion, that the 'souls of the righteous who were very eminent in piety, were carried immediately into paradise.' The Chaldee paraphrase on Solomon's Song, iv. 12, takes some notice of the 'souls of the just, who are carried into paradise by the hands of angels.' Grotius, in his notes on Luke xxiii. 43, mentions the hearty and serious wish of the Jews concerning their friends who are dead, in the language of the Talmudical writers, 'let his soul be gathered to the garden of Eden :' and, in their solemn prayers when one dies, 'let him have his portion in paradise, and also in the world to come,' by which they mean the state of the resurrection, and plainly distinguish it from this immediate entrance into Eden or paradise at the hour of death. The Jews suppose Enoch to be carried to paradise even in his body ; and that the souls of good men have no interrup-

tion of life, but that there was a 'reward for blameless souls,' as the book of Wisdom speaks, chap. ii. 22, "For God created man to be immortal, and to be an image of his own eternity," which seems to suppose 'blameless souls' entering into this reward without interruption of their life. And, if this be the meaning of paradise among the Jews, doubtless our Saviour spake the words in such a known and common sense, in which the penitent thief would easily and presently understand him, it being a promise of grace in his dying hour, wherein he had no long time to study hard for the sense of it, or consult the critics in order to find the meaning.

We come now to consider the writings of St. Paul: and it is certain, that the most natural and obvious sense of his words in many places of his epistles, refer to a Separate State of the souls after death. For, as he was a Pharisee in his sentiments of religion, so he seems to be something of a Platonist in philosophy, so far as Christianity admitted the same principles.* Why then should it not be reasonably supposed, wheresoever he speaks of this subject, and speaks in their language too, that he means the same thing which the Pharisees and Platonists believed, that is, the immortality and life of the soul in a Separate State. But I proceed to the particular texts.

V. 2 Cor. v. 6, 8, "Therefore we are always confident, (or of good courage,) knowing, that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord: we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." The apostle ver. 4, seems to wish that he might be clothed upon at once with immortality in soul and body, without dying or being unclothed: but since things are otherwise determined, then, in the next place, he would rather choose 'absence from the body,' that he might be 'present with the Lord.' These words seem to be so plain, so express, and so unanswerable a proof of the spirits of good men existing in a Separate State, and being 'present with the Lord, when they are 'absent from the body' at death, that I could never meet but with two ways of evading it.

* As Paul wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, I must protest against a practice becoming more and more prevalent, of imputing human theories, be it Platonism, or any other *ism*, to him, or to any other of the inspired writers.—Ed.

The first is what a gentleman many years ago, who professed Christianity, acknowledged to me, viz. that he believed St. Paul did mean, in this place, the same sense in which I have explained him; but he thought St. Paul might be mistaken in his opinion, for he was not of the apostle's mind in this point. I think I need not tarry to refute this answer: but I may make this remark upon it, viz. that the sense of St. Paul concerning the Separate State was so evident, in this place, that this man had rather differ from the apostle than deny this to be his meaning. All his prejudices against this doctrine could not hinder him from acknowledging that the apostle believed and taught it.

The second way of evading it is, that this text, with one or two others of like kind, do indeed speak of the happiness of souls in a Separate State, but it doth refer only to the apostles themselves, who had this peculiar favour and privilege granted them by Christ, to follow him to paradise and enjoy his presence there, while the souls of other Christians were asleep, unconscious and unactive till the resurrection.

Answer 1. It is granted indeed, that several verses of this chapter, as well as in the former, have a peculiar reference to the ministers of Christ, and perhaps to the apostles who were his ambassadors; but there are many things in both these chapters that are perfectly applicable to every Christian, and the verses just before and just after this eighth verse, may belong to all good men as well as to the apostles or ministers. "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing," i. e. for the happiness of the future state, "is God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit," at least as an enlightener and sanctifier, if not as the author of special gifts, for, Rom. viii. 9, "If any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And ver. 6. "therefore we are always confident," or of good courage, "knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord, for we walk by faith not by sight." This is or should be the character of every Christian. And the 9th verse that follows it, belongs to all the saints. "Wherefore we labour that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him; for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Now why

should we suppose that St. Paul excludes all other Christians besides himself and his brethren the apostles from the blessing of the 8th verse, viz. that when they are "absent from the body 'they' shall be present with the Lord," since the verses all round it are applicable to all Christians?

Answer 2. These chapters were written with a design not only to vindicate and encourage the apostle himself under the sufferings and reproaches which he met with, but doubtless to give encouragement to the Corinthians, and all Christians under any sufferings or reproaches they might meet with in the world; that (as he expresses it a little before) they might learn "to walk by faith and to look at the things which are unseen, which are eternal." And indeed if this peculiar blessing of the happiness of a Separate State belongs only to the apostles, how much are the comforts of the New Testament narrowed and diminished, and the faith and hope of common Christians discouraged and enervated, and their motives to holiness weakened, when they are told, that they have nothing to do to lay hold upon such promised favours, such revelations of grace, because they belong only to the apostles and not to them.

And indeed how shall common Christians ever know what part of the epistles they may apply to themselves for their direction and consolation, if they may not hope in such words of grace, where the holy writers use the word 'we,' and do not plainly intimate that they belong to preachers or apostles only?

Answer 3. When our Saviour prays for himself and his apostles in the beginning of the xviith of St. John, he comes in the 20th verse to extend the blessings he had prayed for to all believers. Ver. 20. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Ver. 24. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." Here it is evident that our Saviour prays that those that shall believe on him through the word of the Apostles may be present with him in his kingdom to behold his glory; and is not that a very considerable part of his glory, which the Father hath conferred upon him to be Lord and King and head

of his church? But this peculiar glory reaches no further than the resurrection and judgment, and cannot be seen afterwards; for in 1 Cor. xv. 24, "then cometh the end, and Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to God the Father; the Son himself also shall be subject unto the Father, that God may be all in all," ver. 28.

As for that final blaze of supreme glory wherein Christ shall appear at the day of judgment just before he resigns up his kingdom, and which perhaps is once called 'his kingdom,' 2 Tim. iv. 1; "when he shall come in the glory of his Father and of his holy angels as well as his own," Mark viii. 38, the sight of it shall be public and common to all the world, and not any peculiar favour to the saints.

It seems therefore most probable that it is only or chiefly in the Separate State of souls departed, that the saints have a special promise of beholding this mediatorial glory of Christ in his kingdom; and this favour our Saviour entreats of his Father for others that shall believe on him, as well as for his Apostles.

I might here take occasion to enquire whether every text which promises to other Christians as well as to the Apostles, a dwelling with Christ 'in his kingdom,' must not have a more special reference to the glory of the Separate State; upon this very account, because this kingdom* of Christ ceases at the resurrection and judgment; and particularly that text in 2 Pet. i. 11, "so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ:" which is often in Scripture called everlasting because it continues to the end of the world; and the 'abundant entrance into it' very naturally refers to our departure from this life.

Answer 4. I cannot find any text of Scripture where this blessing of being 'present with the Lord' after death in the Separate State is limited only to the Apostles. I read not one word of such a peculiar favour promised them by Christ; and therefore according to the current course of several other places of Scripture which have been here produced, I am persuaded it belongs to all true Christians, unless the Apostle in some plainer manner had limited it to himself and his twelve brethren, and secluded or forbid our hopes of it.

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* I. e. his *mediatorial* kingdom.—Ed.

After all, if it be allowed that the Apostles may enjoy the blessedness of a Separate State before the resurrection, then there is such a thing as a 'Separate State of happiness for souls.' This precludes at once all the arguments against it that arise from the nature of things, and from any supposed impropriety in such a divine constitution; and since it is granted that there are millions of angels and several human spirits in this unbodied state, enjoying happiness, I see no reason why the rest of the unbodied spirits of saints departed should not be received to their society after death, unless there were some particular Scriptures that excluded them from it.

VI. Phil. i. 23, 24, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." When the apostle speaks here of his "abiding in the flesh," and his "departing from the flesh," he declares the first was the more needful for the Philippians, to promote religion in their hearts and lives; but the second would be better for himself, for he should be with Christ, when he was departed from the flesh.

I would only ask any reasonable man to determine whether, when St. Paul speaks of his "being with Christ" after his departure from the flesh, he can suppose that the Apostle did not expect to see Christ till the resurrection, which he knew would be a considerable distance of time, though perhaps it has proved many hundred years longer than the Apostle himself expected it? No; it is evident he hoped to 'be present with the Lord' immediately as soon as he was 'absent from the body;' otherwise, as I have hinted before, death to him would have been but of little gain if he must have lain sleeping till the dead shall rise, and have been cut off from his delightful service for Christ in the gospel and all the blessed communications of his grace. The objection which may arise here also from supposing this to be a peculiar favour granted to the Apostles is answered just before.

VII. Heb. xii. 23, "Ye are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written ('or registered') in heaven, to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New covenant," i. e. The gospel or the

Christian state brings good men into a nearer union and communion with the heavenly world, and the inhabitants thereof, than the Jewish state could do: now the inhabitants of this upper world, this heavenly Jerusalem, are here reckoned up, God as the prime Lord or Head ; Jesus the Mediator as the King of his church ; 'the innumerable company of angels' as ministers of his kingdom ; 'the general assembly' of God's favourites or children who are called the first-born ; perhaps this may refer in general to all the saints of all ages past and to come whose names are written in the book of life in heaven ; and particularly to the 'separate spirits of just men' who are departed from this world, and are made perfect in the heavenly state. The criticisms that are used to put other senses upon these words seem to carry them away so far from their more plain and obvious meaning, that I can hardly think they are the meaning of the Apostle ; for it would be of very little use for a common Christian to read these verses of divine consolation and grace, if he could take no comfort from them until he had learnt those critical and distant expositions of such plain language.

It has been indeed objected against the plain sense of this text, that the 'spirits of the just' or good men are not yet made perfect in heaven, because the same Apostle, Heb. xi. 39, 40, says, "These all, (i. e. the saints of the Old Testament,) having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promises, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Now these had been dead for many generations, yet they received not the promises nor were made perfect. Thus saith the objection.

But the evident meaning of this text is, that they lived and died in the faith of many promises, some of which were to be fulfilled after their days here on earth. but were not fulfilled in their life-time : they did not enjoy the privileges and the blessings of the gospel of the Messiah in that perfect manner in which we do since the Messiah is actually come and has fulfilled these promises, and by his death, 'or offering himself,' as the same apostle expresses it, "for ever perfected them that are sanctified," Heb. x. 14. But all this does by no means preclude their existence and happiness in a Separate State as 'spirits made perfect,' i. e. in a perfect freedom from all sin and

sorrow; though it is probable this very state of comparative perfection might have several degrees of joy added to it at the ascension of Christ, and will have many more at the resurrection from the dead.

VIII. 2 Pet. i. 13, "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle." Here it is evident that the person who 'thinks it meet to stir up' Christians to their duty, has a tabernacle belonging to him, and which he must 'shortly put off.' The soul or thinking principle of the Apostle Peter, which is here supposed to be himself, is so plainly distinguished from the tabernacle of the body in which he dwelt for a season, and which he 'must put off shortly,' that it most evidently implies an existence of this thinking soul very distinct from the body, and which will exist when the body is laid aside. Surely the conscious being and its tabernacle or dwelling place are two very distinct things, and the conscious being exists when he puts off his present dwelling.

After all these arguments from Scripture, may I be permitted to mention one which is derived partly from reason and partly from the sacred records, which seems to carry some weight with it.

The doctrine of rewards and punishments in a Separate State of souls hath been one of the very chief principles or motives whereby virtue and religion have been maintained in this sinful world throughout all former ages and nations, and under the several dispensations of God among men, until the resurrection of the body was fully revealed. Now, it is scarce to be supposed that such a doctrine, which God, in the course of his providence, hath made use of as a chief principle and motive of religion and virtue, through all the world which had any true virtue, and in all ages before Christianity, should be a false doctrine. Let us prove the first proposition by a view of the several ages of mankind and dispensations of religion.

The Heathens, who have had nothing else but the light of nature to guide them, could have no notion at all of the resurrection of the body; and therefore, not only the wisest and best of them, but perhaps the bulk of mankind among the Gentiles, at least in Europe and Asia, if not in Africa and America also, who have been taught by priests,

and poets, and the public opinions of their nation, and traditions of their ancestors, have generally supposed such a Separate State after this life, wherein their souls should be rewarded or punished, except where the fancy of transmigration prevailed; and even these very transmigrations into other bodies, viz. of dogs, or horses, or men, were assigned as speedy rewards or punishments of their behaviour in this life.

Now, though this doctrine of immediate recompences could not be proved by them with certainty and clearness, and had many follies mingled with it, yet the probable expectation of it, so far as it hath obtained among men, hath had a good degree of influence through the conduct of common providence, to keep the world in some tolerable order, and prevent universal irregularities and excesses of the highest degree; it hath had some force on the conscience to restrain the enormous wickedness of men.

The 'patriarchs of the first ages,' whose history is related in Scripture, had no notion of the resurrection of the body expressly revealed to them that we can find; and it must be the hope of such a state of recompence of their souls after death, that influenced their practice of piety, if they were not informed that their bodies should rise again.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had no plain and distinct promise of the resurrection of the body; yet it is said, Heb. xi. 14, "They received the promises," that is, of some future happiness, "and embraced them, and confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on earth, whereby they plainly declared, that they sought some other country, i. e. an heavenly, and God hath prepared a city for them." What city, what heavenly country can this be, which they themselves sought after, but the city or country of Separate Souls or paradise, where good men are rewarded, and 'God is their God,' if they had no plain promises or views of a resurrection of the body? And indeed they had need of a very plain and express promise of such a resurrection, to encourage their faith and obedience, if they had no notion or belief of a Separate State, or a 'heavenly country,' whither their souls should go at their death.*

Job seems to have some bright glimpses of resurrection

* Enoch prophesied of the day of judgment, Jude 14, 15, and Abraham knew that God could raise the dead, Heb. xi. 19. Moderns are apt to form mistaken notions concerning the knowledge of the ancients.—Ed.

in chap. xixth, but this was far above the level of the dispensation wherein he lived, and a peculiar and distinguishing favour granted to him under his uncommon and peculiar sufferings.

In the institution of the Jewish religion by Moses, there is no express mention of a resurrection, and we must suppose their hope of a future state was chiefly such as they could gain from the light of nature, and learn by traditions from their fathers, or from unwritten instructions. For, though our Saviour improves the words of God to Moses in the bush, "I am the God of Abraham," &c. so far as to prove a resurrection from them, yet we can hardly suppose the Israelites could carry it any further, than merely to the happiness of Abraham's soul, &c. in some Separate State; and thence came the notion of departed souls of good men "going to the bosom of Abraham."

I grant that David in his Psalms, Isaiah and Daniel in their propheeies, have some hints of the resurrection of the body; but this doth not seem to have been the common principle or support of virtue and goodness, or a general article of belief among the Jews in the early ages.

In the days of the later prophets, and after their return from Babylon, I confess the Jews had some notions of a resurrection; but they also retained their opinion of the "righteous souls being at rest with God" in a Separate State before the resurrection. See the book of Wisdom, chap. iii. 1—4, "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction; but they are in peace; for, though they be perished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality," and iv. 7, "Though the righteous be prevented with death, yet they shall be in rest."

That this was the most common doctrine of the Jews, except the Sadducees and their followers, in our Saviour's time, and that it was the doctrine of the primitive Christians also, need not be proved here; though they also had the expectation of the resurrection of the body.

Now, if this be the chief or only doctrine which men could attain to under the dispensation of natural reason, as the most powerful motive to virtue and piety, if this

be the chiefest doctrine of that kind that we know of, which the patriarchs and the primitive Jews enjoyed, if this also be a constant doctrine of later Jews, i. e. the wisest and best of them, and also of the 'primitive Christians,' which had so much influence on the good behaviour of all of them toward God and men, and by which God carried on his work of piety in their hearts and lives, and by which also he impressed the consciences of evil men, in some measure, and restrained them from their utmost excesses of vice and wickedness, is it not hard to be supposed that this doctrine is all mere fancy and delusion, and hath nothing of truth in it? And indeed, if this doctrine had been taken away, the Heathens would be left without any possible true notion of a future state of recompence, and the Patriarchs seem to have had no sufficient principle or motive to virtue and piety left them, and the principles and motives of goodness in the following ages among 'Jews and Christians,' had been greatly diminished and enfeebled.

At the conclusion of this chapter, I cannot help taking notice, (though I shall but just mention it,) that the multitude of narratives which we have heard of in all ages of the 'apparition of the spirits or ghosts' of persons departed from this life, can hardly be all delusion and falsehood. Some of them have been affirmed to appear upon such great and important occasions, as may be equal to such an unusual event. And several of these accounts have been attested by such witnesses of wisdom, and prudence, and sagacity, under no distempers of imagination, that they may justly demand a belief; and the effects of these apparitions in the discovery of murders and things unknown, have been so considerable and useful, that a fair disputant should hardly venture to run directly counter to such a cloud of witnesses, without some good assurance on the contrary side. He must be a shrewd philosopher indeed, who, upon any other hypothesis, can give a tolerable account of all the narratives in 'Glanvill's Sadducismus Triumphatus,' or 'Baxter's World of spirits and apparitions,' &c. Though I will grant some of these stories have but insufficient proof, yet, if there be but one real apparition of a departed spirit, then the point is gained, that there is a Separate State.

And indeed, the Scripture itself seems to mention such

sort of ghosts or appearances of souls departed, Matth. xiv. 26. When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, they "thought it had been a spirit:" and, Luke xxiv. 36, after his resurrection they saw him at once appearing in the midst of them, "and they supposed they had seen a spirit;" and our Saviour doth not contradict their notion, but argues with them upon the supposition of the truth of it, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me to have." And Acts xxiii. 8, 9. The word *spirit* seem to signify the 'apparition of a departed soul,' where it is said "the Sadducees say, There is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit," and ver. 9, "If a spirit or an angel hath spoken to this man," &c. A *spirit* here is plainly distinct from an angel, and what can it mean but an apparition of a human soul which has left the body?

§ IV. Objections answered.

Having pointed out so many springs of argument to support this doctrine, from the word of God as well as from reason and tradition, I proceed now to answer some particular objections which are raised against it.

Object. I. The Scripture is so far from supposing that the soul of man is immortal, or that there is any such thing as the life of the soul continuing after the death of the body, that it often speaks of the "death of the soul," if the words were translated exactly according to the original. Numb. xxxi. 19, "Whosoever hath killed any person," *Hebr.* any soul. 1 Sam. xxii. 22, "I have occasioned the death of every *soul* of thy father's house." Judges xvi. 30, "And Sampson said, Let my *soul* die with the Philistines." Ezk. xviii. 20, "The *soul* that sinneth it shall die." Psal. lxxxix. 48, "What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? shall he deliver his *soul* from the hand of the grave?" 1 Kings xix. 4, "Elijah requested for himself that he might die," *Hebr.* that his soul might die.*

Answ. The word *soul* in English, *Nephesh* in Hebrew, *Psyche* in Greek, and *Anima* in Latin, &c. signifies not only the conscious and active principle in man, which thinks and reasons, loves and hates, hopes and fears, and which is the proper agent in virtue or vice, but it is used

* The simple answer to this objection is, that in the Hebrew idiom *soul*, as denoting the more excellent part of man, is commonly used for the whole *person*: "Let my *soul* die," means, "let *me* die," &c.—Ed.

also to signify the principle of animal life and motion in a living creature. And, though these two in themselves are very distinct things, yet, upon this account, the word *soul* is attributed to brutes as well as to men. For the Jews as well as some Heathens, in their mistaken philosophy, supposed the same 'soul of man,' which gives natural life to the body, to be also that very intellectual principle, which thinks and reasons, fears and loves; and, upon this account, they gave both these principles, how distinct soever in themselves, one common name, and called them 'the soul.'

Now, the *soul*, or the principle of animal life and motion, being the chief or most valuable thing in an animal, it came to pass that the whole animal was called a *soul*: therefore, even birds and fishes are called "living souls," Gen. i. 20, and any animals whatsoever in Scripture are called 'souls' or 'living souls.' And then, for the same reason, i. e. because the 'soul of man' is his chief part, the whole person of man is called 'his soul,' Gen. ii. 7, "Man became a living soul," i. e. a living person. So Exod. i. 5, "All the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls," i. e. all the persons were seventy.

And this is not only the language of the Jews, but even of other nations. In our country we use the word *souls* to signify *persons*. So we say 'a poor soul,' when we see a person in misery; we use the word 'a meagre soul,' for a thin man; we say, 'there were twenty souls lost in the ship,' i. e. twenty persons,' &c.

Now, the word *soul* among the Jews being so universally used to signify the 'person of man, they used the same word to signify 'the person' when he was dead as well as when he was alive. Numb. vi. 6, "He shall come at no dead body," in the Hebr. no dead soul, i. e. no dead man or woman, or perhaps no dead animal.

Since the word *soul* is taken so often and so commonly to signify the person of a man or woman, no wonder that there is so frequent mention of *souls* dying in the Scripture, when human persons die.

And, if the *soul* signify a man or woman when they are dead as well as when living, here is a fair account why the Scriptures may speak of the "souls going down to the grave," or being "delivered from the grave," &c. Psal.

lxxxix. 48, "Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" This may either denote his principle of animal life, or his person, i. e. himself.

Now this account of things is very consistent with the scriptural doctrine of the distinction of the 'intelligent soul' of man from his body, and the 'intelligent soul's' survival of the body, nor do any of these scriptural expressions concerning the *soul* forbid this supposition. For, though in some places, the word *soul* signifies 'the person' of the man or his 'body,' or that 'animal principle' which may die, yet in other places it signifies that 'intelligent' or 'thinking principle' which cannot die, as we have before proved where our Saviour tells us, "we should not fear them that kill the body, but cannot kill the soul." Wheresoever the Scripture speaks of a "soul's being killed," it only means that the 'person who was mortal is slain,' i. e. the life of the body is destroyed, and the man considered as a compound being made up of soul and body is in some sense dissolved when one part of the composition dies. But where the *soul* signifies the intellectual principle in man, it is never said 'to die,' unless the word 'death' means a loss of happiness, or living in misery; but this implies natural 'life' still, for this soul cannot naturally be destroyed by any power but that which made it.

If any person object that the apostle in Acts ii. 31, says, "the soul of Christ was not left in hell, or the grave;" for so the word in Hebrew may signify, Psal, xvi. 10, whence this is cited; there is a sufficient answer to be given to this two or three ways. It may be construed, that the principle of the animal life of Christ was not left to continue in death; or that the person of the man Jesus was not left in death or the grave, the body being sometimes put for the person; or it may be as well construed, that the spirit of Christ or his intellectual soul was not left in the state of the dead, or of separation from the body, which the word *sheol* in the Hebrew and ἅδης in Greek, signify.

Here it may be observed also, that the word which signifies 'spirit, ruach, pneuma, spiritus,' in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and other languages, is used sometimes for air or breath, which is supposed to be the principle of life to the animal body; and sometimes it signifies the 'intellectual soul,' the conscious and active principle in man; and therefore whatsoever may be said of the 'spirit's dying,'

or 'being lost,' is no proof that the conscious principle in man dies, which is a very different thing from breath or air.

Perhaps it will be said here, does not Moses suppose breath to be the soul or spirit in man, when he says, Gen. ii. 7, "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

I answer, it is evident that Moses makes a plain difference between God's formation of man and brutes, for he makes no distinction between their soul and body in their creation; but he distinguishes the soul from the body of man, in his creation, speaking according to the common language and philosophy of that age as though the soul were in the breath: nor was it proper to speak in strict philosophical language to those ignorant people; nor were the modes of expression in the Bible so peculiarly formed to teach us philosophy as religion.

But of this distinction between the 'soul of a brute,' and the 'soul of a man,' there seems to be a plain intimation given by Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes chap. iii. 21. "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of a beast that goeth downward to the earth?" that the 'spirit of man,' i. e. his conscious and intellectual principle 'goeth upward,' or survives at the death of the body, but 'the spirit of the beast,' i. e. the spring of its animal life, 'goeth down to the earth,' is mingled with the common elements of this material world and entirely lost.

But the wise man in this place perhaps expresses some of his former atheistical doubts, saying, 'who knows' whether there is any difference between them? yet it intimates thus much, that men who pretended to wisdom in that age, supposed such a difference between the spirit of man and the spirit of a brute.

Object. II. Is taken from Psal. vi. 5, "In death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" and Psal. cxlvi. 4, "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish;" and Eccles. ix. 5, "The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not any thing." From all which words some would infer there is no such thing as a Separate State of souls.

Answ. Both David and his son Solomon exclude all such sort of thoughts and actions, both religious and civil, from the state of death as are practised in this life, all the

pursuits of their present purposes, their present way and manner of divine worship, and their management or consciousness of human affairs: but they do not exclude all manner of consciousness, knowledge, thought or action, such as may be suited to the invisible state of spirits. The design of the writers in those places of Scripture requires no more than this, and therefore the words cannot be construed to any farther sense, or to exclude the conscious and active powers of a separate spirit from their proper exercise in that invisible world, though they have done with all their actions in the present visible state.

Object. III. Is taken from John xiv. 3, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also;" which seems to determine the point, that the followers of Christ were not to be present with him until he came again to this world to raise the dead, and to take his disciples to dwell with him.

Answ. 1. It hath been already granted by some persons who doubt of the Separate State of all souls, that the Apostles had this special favour allowed them to be received into the presence of Christ when they departed from this body. Now these words were spoken to the Apostles, and therefore they cannot preclude this privilege which they expected, viz. that when they were 'absent from the body' they should be 'present with the Lord,' 2 Cor. v. 8.

Answ. 2. 'Christ came again' to his disciples at his own resurrection from the dead, and taught them the things of the other world, and better prepared them for the happiness of heaven and his own presence. He came again also by the destruction of the Jewish state, and called his own people thence before-hand, as an emblem of their salvation when the world should be destroyed. He also 'came again' at their death; when he 'that hath the keys of death and the invisible world' let them out of the prison of the body into the Separate State, that they might dwell with him. The 'coming of Christ' has many and various senses in the New Testament, and need not be referred only to his 'coming at the day of judgment.'

Answ. 3. But suppose in this place the words of Christ be construed concerning his 'great and public coming' to raise the dead and Judge the world; it is certain that in that day the disciples shall be received to 'dwell with him'

in a much more complete and glorious manner, when both soul and body shall be made the inhabitants of heaven. But this does not preclude or forbid that the separate souls of his followers should be favoured with his presence in paradise before his public coming to Judge the world. Though the last and greatest blessing be only mentioned here, it does not exclude the former.

Object. IV. St. Paul in Phil. iii. 10, 11, says, that he desired "to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, (&c.) if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead:" now what need had the Apostle to be so solicitous about the resurrection if he expected to be with Christ immediately upon his death, since being with Christ is the state of ultimate happiness?*

Answ. 1. Some learned men suppose that the apostle here presses after some peculiar exaltations of piety in this world, and after an interest in some first resurrection, or resurrection of the martyrs and most eminent saints, which would be long before the general resurrection of all the dead, according to the visions of St. John, Rev. xx. 4—7. But as I am not sufficiently acquainted with the sense of that prophecy to determine my opinion on this side, I proceed to other answers.

Answ. 2. What if the words of St. Paul in this place to the Philippians, should mean no more than this, as ver. 13, 14, "I forgot the things that are behind," as though I had gained so little already as not to be worth my notice; "and I reach forth unto those things which are before," i. e. further degrees of holiness to be obtained, 'pressing towards the mark' of perfection, 'if by any means I might be made so conformable to the death of Christ,' as to be entirely dead to sin, and 'if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead,' i. e. to such a perfection of holiness as is represented by the resurrection of Christ, Rom. vi, or as that in which the 'dead saints shall be raised;' for I know 'I have not already attained it, nor am already perfect.'

Answ. 3. Suppose the soul of St. Paul to be present with Christ after death in heaven in the Separate State, yet this is not the ultimate or highest 'happiness of the saints,' and therefore he aimed at something higher and

* Paul refers to the 'resurrection to eternal life," of which he speaks in v. 20, 21, of the same chapter, with glowing energy.—Ed.

further, namely, the more complete happiness which he should enjoy at the resurrection of the dead.

Object. V. is borrowed from several verses of 1 Cor. xv. where the Apostle is imagined to argue thus, "If there be no resurrection of the dead," ver. 18, "Then they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished," ver. 19; "then we have hope only in this life," and nothing else to support us. Then ver. 32, "what advantage" do I get by all my sufferings for Christ, if the dead rise not? We had better comply with the appetites of the flesh and enjoy a merry life here, "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die:" whereby it is evident that the Apostle places the blessed expectation 'of those that are fallen asleep in Christ' only and entirely upon their being 'raised from the dead,' which he would not have done if there had been such a Separate State: he extends 'our hope in Christ' beyond 'this life,' and raises his own expectation of advantage or reward for his sufferings on the account of the gospel entirely and only upon the 'resurrection of the dead,' having no notion of any happiness in a Separate State of souls: for if he had any such opinion or hope, this expectation of the happiness of the soul in a Separate State might have been a sufficient proof that those who died or slept in the faith of Christ, are 'not perished,' and he had abundant reward for his sufferings in that world of separate souls without the resurrection of the body.

Answ. 1. It must be granted that the Scripture, in order to support Christians under present trials, chiefly refers them to the day of the resurrection and final judgment, as the great and chief season of retribution: the reason of this will appear under my answer to a following objection. Now the Apostle may be supposed to argue here only on this foot, neglecting or overlooking the Separate State, as though this final retribution at and after the resurrection of the body were comparatively the whole, because it is far the chief and most considerable part, being much the most sensible, and conspicuous, and of the longest duration. The chief part of any thing is often taken for the whole; and if there were no resurrection of the dead, i. e. if there were no state of retribution at all, then the Epicurean reasoning would be good, 'Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die.'

And, to confirm this exposition, we may take notice, that

in other places of Scripture, where the 'resurrection of the dead' is mentioned, this anastasis includes the whole state of existence after death, both the Separate and the resurrection State. This seems to be the sense of it in that famous place, Luke xx. 35, where Christ argues with the Sadducees, who denied the Separate State as well as the resurrection of the body. Now if you take away this anastasis, this whole state of existence and retribution, then they that suffer for Christ have no advantage or recompence, and the Epicurean doctrine is plainly preferable, at least in the common sense and reasoning of men, and in such seasons of trial and persecution.

Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that there might be some of these principles of Sadducism begun to be instilled into some of the Corinthians, viz. that there were rewards and punishments at all in any future state; for he tells them, ver. 34. that some of them 'had not the knowledge of God,' i. e. as a righteous rewarder of them that diligently seek him, "I speak this," says he, "to your shame." And ver. 5, 8, he encourages them to be "steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord;" i. e. there is certainly a future state of recompence for piety, and the discovery of it at the resurrection of the dead is the most public and glorious part of it, and therefore he insists upon this alone.

Answ. 2. But we may give yet a more particular answer to this objection: for if we take in the whole scheme of the Apostle's argument in this chapter, we shall find there is no sufficient ground for this objection against a Separate State. He begins, ver. 12, 13, &c. and argues thus, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen," for he rose as the 'first fruits,' and his followers shall be the harvest, ver. 23, but if there be no harvest there were no first-fruits: and "if Christ be not risen, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain;" ver. 14, "then we are found false witnesses in matters that relate to God," ver. 15. mere impostors, who preach a wicked falsehood, and lead you to hope for a happiness which ye shall never obtain: for "if Christ, who died for our sins," ver. 3, "be not raised for our justification," as in Rom. iv. ult. "then are ye yet in your sins," ye lie yet under the guilt of sin; and if so, "then also they

which have fallen asleep in Christ," or have died in the faith of Christ, are perished, ver. 18, they must either be condemned, or be utterly lost both soul and body, having no ground for hope of eternal life, or any life or happiness at all hereafter. Then 'the hope of Christians would be in this life only,' and we are 'miserable creatures' who suffer so much for Christ's sake, ver. 19 : it would be better for us who have senses and appetites as well as other men, to indulge these senses and appetites, and 'eat and drink for to-morrow we die,' and there is an end of us : there can be no future state of happiness of any kind for us to expect, either in soul or body, if we have deceived you in the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ, and all our gospel be false. We are then such sort of impostors and wicked cheats as can have no belief of a future state of rewards or punishments, and we had better act like ourselves, and like mere Epicureans, give ourselves up to all present pleasures than expose ourselves to perpetual sufferings for the sake of a man, who (if there be no resurrection) died and never rose again, and therefore cannot make us any recompence. Now this sort of arguing does not at all preclude the Separate State of happiness, but rather establish it.

I might add here a further answer to this objection, viz. the Apostle is representing the 'sufferings of the body' for Christ's sake, ver. 30—32, and therefore he thinks it proper to encourage Christians with the recompence of the 'resurrection of the body,' without taking any particular notice of the happiness of the Separate State of the soul : and in this view of things his argument stands good. If there be no resurrection of the body, there is no recompence for sufferings in the body ; let us then give the body its pleasures of sense ; 'Let us eat and drink' while we live, for there is an utter end of us in death. But (saith he, ver. 33,) such 'evil traditions corrupt all good manners,' and therefore they are not, they cannot be true : there must be a resurrection of the body to encourage sufferings in the body for the sake of virtue and religion.*

* There are several pages of just and pertinent answers to this objection by my learned and ingenious friend Mr. Henry Grove, in his 'Thoughts concerning the Proof of a Future State from Reason,' which confirm the replies I have here made. 'Then they,' saith he, 'who are fallen asleep in Christ (by whom the martyrs seem to be more especially intended) are

Object. VI. Doth not the New Testament constantly refer the rewards and punishments of good and bad men to the time of the resurrection of the dead, or the second coming of Christ? Is it not with this prospect it terrifies the sinner? Is it not with this it comforts the good man, and supports him under his present sufferings? It would be endless to cite all the particular texts on this occasion. That one text, 1 Thess. iv. 14, speaks the sense of many others, and is sufficient to be cited here. The Apostle persuades Christians not to "mourn for the dead as those that sorrow without hope," and gives this reason, "for those who sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him," when he comes to raise the dead, and then 'they shall be for ever with the Lord;' and he bids them 'comfort one another with these words:' whereas their comforts had been much nearer at hand if he could have told them of the Separate State of happiness which the departed souls of their friends at present enjoyed; and if there had been any such state he had the fairest opportunity here to introduce it.

Answ. This very text I have mentioned before as a proof of the Separate State, and it is plain the Apostle seems to hint it, though he doth not insist upon it, when he supposes the soul of the deceased to be with Christ already; for he saith, "God will bring them with him," i. e. from heaven when he comes to raise their bodies.

But to give a more general answer to the objection, as drawn from the silence of Scripture, in many places, about this doctrine of the Separate State.

There are good reasons why the New Testament more sparingly mentions the Separate State of souls, and doth most frequently (but not constantly) refer both rewards and punishments to the resurrection.

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perished, for any thing that Christ can do for them, who will never reward them for their sufferings, never restore that life which they lost for his sake.' And particularly his exposition on those words, 'we are most miserable of all men,' is very agreeable to the place. 'The Greek ελεεινοτεροι signifies that we are 'more to be pitied' than any men, as wanting the common understanding of men to suffer death for Christ's sake, who would never be able to recompence us for it, if he be not risen from the dead. And it is (saith he a little afterward) for want of observing the intermediate links of the Apostle's argument (which he there represents), that some have been at a loss for his meaning, while others have quite mistaken it.' See p. 124, &c.—Watts.

(1.) Because the Heathens themselves (at least the wisest and best of them) did believe some sort of future state of happiness or misery, into which the souls of men should be disposed when they departed from these bodies, according to the vices or virtues they had practised in this life; and they derived this doctrine from their reasonings upon the foot of the light of nature. The writings of Plato and his followers, and the sentiments of Socrates conveyed to us in Plato's writings, are full of this opinion, viz. of the existence of the souls of good men in a happy state, when they depart from the body. Cicero sometimes speaks of it as his opinion, his desire and his hope, nor were other heathen writers ignorant of this doctrine; but the New Testament speaks less of this point, because it is the evident design of Christ and his Apostles to lead their disciples to the more 'peculiar doctrines of revelation,' rather than to treat them with sentiments derived from the light of nature. And this doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, and the eternal rewards and eternal punishments that attend it, are more abundantly mentioned in the New Testament, because they stand so much more connected with the gospel of Christ, and with his own resurrection from the dead, which is the chief evidence of its divine authority. It is Christ who rose from the dead, who is appointed to raise and to judge all mankind; and therefore it is natural for the Apostles in their writings, who desire to keep the death and resurrection of Christ always in the view of their converts, to point to the awful events of that day, when their Saviour, risen from the dead, shall appear in the execution of his glorious commission and judge the world. Thus St. Paul preaches to the Athenians, Acts xvii. 30. "God now commands all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." And in many other places he connects our resurrection and future recompences with the resurrection of Christ.

And in this respect, as well as in some others, the doctrine of rewards and punishments after the resurrection, seems to carry such superior force in it, especially upon those who believe the gospel, that it is no wonder the New Testament more frequently refers to this great day

of resurrection, and the apostle derives the chief part of his consolations or terrors from it.

(2.) Then will be the 'public and universal retributions' of vice and virtue in a more solemn manner exhibited before all the world, whereas the entrance of mankind into the recompences of the Separate State is more private and personal.

(3.) Then will be the day of 'complete rewards and punishments' of man in both parts of his nature, soul and body. All the Separate State belongs only to the soul, and even those recompences are but imperfect in comparison of what they will be when body and soul are united.

(4.) Then will be the most glorious, visible and sensible distinction made between the good and bad; and since this belongs to the body as well as the soul, it is very properly set before the eyes of men in the holy writings as done at the resurrection: because corporeal and sensible things work more powerfully on their imagination, and more sensibly and effectually strike the consciences of men, than the notion of mere spiritual rewards and punishments in the Separate State.

(5.) The state of rewards and punishments after the resurrection, will be far the longest and most durable recompence of the good and the bad: and therefore it is called 'eternal' so often in Scripture, 'everlasting life,' and 'everlasting fire,' Matth. xxv. 41. Whereas the retributions of the Separate State are comparatively but of short duration; and this is another thing that makes a sensible impression on the hearts of men, viz. the 'eternal continuance' of the joys and sorrows that follow the last judgment.

Perhaps it will be replied here, that in the beginning of this essay I represented the Separate State as a 'more effectual motive' to the hopes and fears of men, because the joys and sorrows of it were so much 'nearer at hand' than those of the resurrection: and why do I now represent the recompences of the resurrection under such characters as are fit to have the strongest influence, and become the most 'effectual motive?'

Answ. It is granted that the recompences after the resurrection have several circumstances that carry with them some peculiar and most powerful motives to religion and virtue; but that awful day may still seem to want this

one motive, viz. 'the nearness of it,' which belongs eminently to the recompences of the Separate State. Now, if the Scripture does really reveal the doctrine of rewards and punishments of souls immediately after death, and of soul and body together at the resurrection, then all those circumstances of effectual motive to piety are collected in our doctrine, viz. the 'immediate nearness of them' in the Separate State, and the 'public appearance,' the 'universality,' the 'completeness,' the 'sensibility,' and the 'duration' of them after the great rising-day.

I might yet take occasion, from this objection, to give a further reason, why the Apostles more frequently draw their motives of hope and fear from the resurrection and the great judgment, i. e. that even that day of recompence was generally then supposed to be 'near at hand,' and so there was less need to insist upon the joys and sorrows of the Separate State.

As the patriarchs and the Jews of old, after the Messiah was promised, were constantly expecting his 'first coming,' almost in every generation till he did appear, and many modes of prophetical expression in Scripture (which speak of things long to come, as though they were present or just at hand) gave them some occasion for this expectation, so the Christians of the first age did generally expect 'the second coming' of Christ to judgment, and the resurrection of the dead, in that very age wherein it was foretold. St. Paul gives us a hint of it in 2 Thess. ii. 1, 2. They supposed the 'day of the Lord was just appearing.' And many expressions of Christ concerning his 'return' or 'coming again' after his departure, seemed to represent his absence as a thing of no long continuance. It is true, these words of his may partly refer to his coming to destroy Jerusalem ; and the coming in of his kingdom among the Gentiles, or his coming by his messenger of death, yet they generally, in their supreme and final sense, point to his 'coming' to raise the dead and judge the world. And from the words of Christ also concerning John, chap. xxi. 22, "If I will that he tarry till I come;" it is probable that the Apostles themselves at first, as well as other Christians, might derive this apprehension of his speedy coming.

It is certain, that when Christ speaks of his 'coming,' in general and promiscuous and parabolical terms, whether

with regard to the destruction of Jerusalem or the judgment of the world, he saith, Matth. xxiv. 34, "Verily I say unto you this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." And the Apostles frequently told the world, the coming of the Lord was near, Phil. iv. 5, "The Lord is at hand," Heb. x. 25, "Exhorting one another, so much the more as you see the day approaching." And that this is the day of the "coming of Christ," ver. 37, assures us, "For yet a little while, he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Rom. xiii. 12, "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep. The night is far spent, the day is at hand." 1 Pet. iv. 5, "To him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead." Ver. 7, "The end of all things is at hand." James v. 8, 9, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Behold the judge standeth at the door." Rev. xxii. 10, "Seal not up the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand." Ver. 12, "And behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man as his work shall be." And the sacred volume is closed with this assurance, ver. 20, "Surely I come quickly," and the echo and the expectation of the Apostle or the church, 'Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus.'

It is granted, that in prophetical expressions, such as all these are, some obscurity is allowed: and it may be doubtful, perhaps, whether some of them may refer to Christ's coming by the destruction of Jerusalem, or his coming to call particular persons away by his messenger of death, or his appearance to the last judgment. It is granted also, it belongs to prophetical language to set things far distant, as it were, before our eyes, and make them seem present or very near at hand. But still these expressions had plainly such an influence on primitive Christians, as that they imagined the day of resurrection and judgment was very near: and, since the prophetical words of Christ and his Apostles seemed to carry this appearance in them, and to keep the church under some uncertainty, it is no wonder that the Apostles chiefly referred the disciples of that age to the day of the resurrection for comfort under their sufferings and sorrows. And, though they never asserted that Christ would come to raise the dead and judge the world in that age, yet, when they knew themselves that he would not come so soon, they might not think it

necessary to give every Christian, nor every church, an immediate account of the more distant time of this great event, that the uncertainty of it might keep them ever watchful. And even when St. Paul informs the Thessalonians that the day of the Lord was not so very near as they imagined it, 2 Thess. ii. 2, yet he does not put it off beyond that century by any express language.

Thus we see there is very good reason why the New Testament should derive its motives of terror and comfort chiefly from the 'resurrection' and the 'day of judgment;' though it is not altogether silent of the Separate State of souls, and their happiness or misery, commencing, in some measure, immediately after death, which has been before proved by many Scriptures cited for that purpose.

Here let it be observed, that I am not concerned in that question, Whether human souls separated from their bodies have any other corporeal vehicle to which they are united, or by which they act during the intermediate state between death and the resurrection? All that I propose to maintain here, is, that that period or interval is not 'a state of sleep,' i. e. utter unconsciousness and unactivity: and, whether it be united to a vehicle or no, I call it still the Separate State, because it is a state of the soul's separation from this body, which is united to it in the present life.

§ V. More Objections answered.

Since this book was written I have met with several other objections against the doctrine here maintained; and, as I think they may all have a sufficient answer given to them, and the truth be defended against the force of them, I thought it very proper to lead the reader into a plain and easy solution of them.

Object. VII. Is not long life represented often in Scripture, and especially in the Old Testament, as a blessing to man? And, is not death set before us as a curse or punishment? But, how can either of these representations be just or true, if souls exist in a Separate State? Are they not then brought into a state of liberty by death, and freed from all the inconveniences of this flesh and blood? By this means death ceases to be a punishment, and long life to be a blessing.

Answ. It is according as the characters of men are

either good or bad, and according as good men know more or less of a Separate State of rewards or punishments, so a long life, or early death, are to be esteemed blessings or calamities in a greater or a less degree.

'Long life' was represented as a blessing to good men, in as much as it gave them opportunity to enjoy more of the blessings of this life, and to do more service for God in the world: and especially since, in ancient times, there was much darkness upon this doctrine of the future state, and many good men had not so clear a knowledge of it. Long life was also a blessing to wicked men, because it kept them in a state wherein there were some comforts, and withheld them, for a season, from the punishments of the Separate State.

Death was doubtless a punishment and a curse when it was first brought into human nature by the sin of Adam, as it cut off mankind from the blessings of this life, and plunged him into a dark and unknown state: and if he were a wicked man, it plunged him into certain misery.

But since the blessings of the future state of happiness for good men are more clearly revealed, 'long life' is not so very great a blessing, nor death so great a punishment to good men; for death is sanctified by the covenant of grace to be an introduction of their souls into the Separate State of happiness, and the curse is turned in some respect into a blessing.

Object. VIII. Was it not supposed to be a great privilege to Enoch and Elijah when they were translated without dying? But, what advantage could it be to either of them to carry a body with them to heaven, if their souls could act without it?

I answer, when Enoch and Elijah carried their bodies to heaven with them, it was certainly a sublime honour and a peculiar privilege which they enjoyed, to have so early an happiness both in flesh and spirit conferred upon them so many ages before the rest of mankind. For though the soul can act without the body, yet as a body is part of the compounded nature of man, our happiness is not designed to be complete till the soul and body are united in a state of perfection and glory: and this happiness was conferred early on those two favourites of heaven.

Object. IX. Was it not designed as a favour when persons were raised from the dead under the Old Testament

or the New, by the Prophets, by Christ, and by his Apostles? But what benefit could this be to them, if they had consciousness and enjoyment in the other world? Was it not rather an injury to bring them back from a state of happiness into such a miserable world as this?

Answ. 1. Since these souls were designed to be soon restored to their bodies, and the persons were to be raised to a mortal life again in a few days, it is probable they were kept just in the same state of immemorial consciousness, as the soul is in while the body is in the deepest sleep; and so were not immediately sent to heaven or hell, or determined to a state of sensible happiness or misery. Then when the person was raised to life again, there was no remembrance of the intermediate state, but all the consciousness of that day or two vanished and were forgotten for ever, as it is with us when we sleep soundly without dreaming.

Answ. 2. If those who were raised by Christ, or the Prophets, or the Apostles, were pious persons, they submitted by the will of God to a longer continuance in this world, amidst some difficulties and sorrows, which submission would be abundantly recompenced hereafter. If they were not good persons, their renewed life on earth was a reprieve from punishment. So there was no injury done to any of them.

As for those who were 'raised at the resurrection of Christ,' and were 'seen by many persons in the holy city,' there is no doubt but they were raised to immortality, and ascended to heaven when Christ did, as part of his triumphant attendants, and went to dwell with him in the heavenly state.

Object. X. If the martyrs and confessors were to be partakers of the first resurrection in Rev. xx. 4, 5, would not this be a punishment instead of a blessing, to be called from the immediate presence of God and Christ and angels, to be re-united to bodies on earth and dwell here again with men? Therefore it seems more probable, that the souls of these holy martyrs had no such separate existence or enjoyment of happiness.

Answ. Perhaps neither that text nor any others in the Bible foretell the resurrection of any number of persons to an animal earthly life again in this world. Perhaps that prophecy means no more, than that the cause of Christ and religion, for which men were martyred and beheaded

heretofore, shall rise again in the world, and the professors of it in that day shall be in flourishing circumstances for a thousand years, or a very long season. So that in prophetic language these words do not signify the same individual martyrs or confessors, but their successors in the same faith and practice.

Or if there should be any resurrection of good men to an animal life in this world, foretold by the prophets, and intended by the great and blessed God, I doubt not but they would be here so far separated from the wicked world where sins and sorrows reign, that it would be a gradual advance of their happiness beyond what they enjoyed before in the Separate State.

Object. XI. Though man is often said to be a compounded creature of soul and body, yet in Scripture he is represented as one being. It is the man that is born, that lives, that sleeps or wakes, and that rises from the dead. This is evident in many places of Scripture, where these things are spoken of; and it seems to be the law of our nature or being, that we should always act and live in such a state as souls united to bodies, and never in a state of separation.

Answ. Though there are several Scriptures which represent man as one being, viz. soul and body united, yet there are many other Scriptures which have been cited in the former parts of this essay, wherein the souls and the bodies of men are represented as two very distinct things. The one goes to the grave at death, and the other into Abraham's bosom, or to a place of torment; either to dwell 'with God,' to 'be present with Christ the Lord,' and to become one of the spirits of the just made perfect, or to go to their own place as Judas did. Now those texts where man is represented as one being, may be explained with very great ease, considering man as made up of two distinct substances, viz. body and spirit united into one personal agent, as we have shewn before. But the several texts where the soul and body are so strongly and plainly distinguished, as has been before represented, there is no possible way of representing these Scriptures but by supposing a Separate State of existence for souls after the body is dead, which makes it necessary that this exposition should take place.

Object. XII. How comes death to be called so often in Scripture a sleep, if the soul wakes all the while?

Answ. Why is the repose of man every night called sleep, since the soul wakes, as appears by a thousand dreams? But as a sleeping man ceases to act in the businesses or affairs of this world, though the soul be not dead or unthinking, so death is called sleep, because during that state men are cut off from the businesses of this world, though the soul may think and act another.

Object. XIII. The Scripture speaks often of the general judgment of mankind at the last great day of the resurrection, but it does not teach us the doctrine of a particular judgment, which the soul is supposed to pass under when every single man dies; why then should we invent such a supposition, or believe such a doctrine of a particular judgment in a Separate State?

Answ. It is evident in many Scriptures, as we have shewn before, that the souls of men after death are represented as enjoying pleasure or punishment in the Separate State. The soul of Lazarus in heaven, the soul of Dives in hell, the soul of Paul as being 'present with the Lord, which is far better,' than dwelling in this flesh, or being present with this body, &c. therefore there must be a sort of judgment or sentence of determination past upon every such soul by the great God, whether it shall be happy or miserable: for it can never be supposed that happiness or misery should be given to such souls without the determination of God the Judge of all. And perhaps that text Heb. ix. 27, refers to it, "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" i. e. immediately after it.

Or suppose that in the Separate State the pleasures or sorrows, which attend souls departing from the body, should be only such as are the necessary consequents of a life spent in the practice of vice or of virtue, of religion or ungodliness, without any formalities of standing before a judgment-seat, or a solemn sentence of absolution or condemnation: yet the very entrance upon this state, whether it be of peace or of torment, must be supposed to signify, that the state of that soul is adjudged or determined by the great Governor of the world: and this is all that is necessarily meant by a particular judgment of each soul at death, whether it pass under the solemn formalities of a judgment and a tribunal or not.

Object. XIV. If the saints can be happy without a bo-

dy, what need of a resurrection? Let the body be as refined, as active, as it can be, still it must certainly be a clog to the soul; and this was the objection that the heathen philosophers made to the doctrine of the resurrection, which the Christians profess; for the philosophers told them, this resurrection, which they called their highest reward, was really a punishment.

Answ. The force of this objection has been quite taken away before, when it has been shewn that man, being a creature compounded of body and spirit, was designed for its highest happiness, and the perfection of its nature in this state of union, and not in a state of separation. And let it be observed, that when the body shall be raised from the grave, it shall not be such flesh and blood as we now wear, nor made up of such materials, as shall clog or obstruct the soul in any of its most vigorous and divine exercises; but it shall be a "spiritual body," 1 Cor. xv. 44, a body fitted to serve a holy and glorified spirit in its actions and its enjoyments, and to render the spirit capable of some further excellencies, both of action and enjoyment, than it is naturally capable of without a body. What sort of qualities this new-raised body shall be endued with, in order to increase the excellency or the happiness of pious souls, will be, in a great measure, a mystery or a secret, till that blessed morning appears.

Object. XV. Is not our immortality in Scripture described as built upon the incorruptible state of our new-raised bodies? 1 Cor. xv. 53, "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality:" but the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is not particularly found or taught in Scripture.

Answ. It is granted that the immortality of the 'new raised body' is built on that incorruptible sort of materials of which it is to be formed, or which shall be mingled with it, or the incorruptible qualities which shall be given to it by God himself: but the soul is immortal in itself, whether with or without a body: and he that can read all those texts of Scripture which have been before made use of in this essay, wherein the existence of the spirit after the death of the body is so plainly expressed, and cannot find the 'immortality of the soul' in them, or the 'spirit's capacity of existence in a Separate State from the body,' must be left to his own senti-

ments to explain and verify the expressions of Christ and his Apostles some other way; or he must acknowledge that these expressions are somewhat untautious and dangerous, since it is evident they lead thousands and ten thousands of wise and sober readers into this sentiment of the soul's immortality.

Whether the soul in its own nature be necessarily immortal, is a point of philosophy, and not to be sought for directly in Scripture: But whether the great God, the Governor of the world, has not appointed souls to exist in a Separate State of happiness or misery after the bodies are dead, seems to me to be so plainly determined in many of the Scriptures which have been cited, as leaves no sufficient reason to doubt the truth of it.

To conclude, though I think the doctrine of the Separate State of souls to be of much importance in Christianity, and that the denial of it carries great inconveniences, and weakens the motive to virtue and piety, by putting off all manner of rewards and punishments to such a distance as the general resurrection, yet I dare not contend for it as a matter of such absolute necessity, that a man cannot be a Christian without it. But this must be confessed, that they who deny this doctrine seem to have need of stronger inward zeal to guard them against temptation, and to keep their hearts always alive and watchful to God and religion, since their motives to strict piety and virtue are sensibly weakened, by renouncing all belief of this nearer and more immediate commencement of heaven and hell.

APPENDIX.

THE following poems, selected from Dr. Watts' *Horæ Lyricæ*, it is believed, will not be unacceptable to the Reader, since they present some trains of thought connected with the subjects discussed in the preceding DISCOURSES, in which poetry, elevated by devotional feeling, soothes the imagination, while it affects the heart.—ED.

EARTH AND HEAVEN.

HAST thou not seen, impatient boy,
  Hast thou not read, the solemn truth,
That grey experience writes for giddy youth
  On ev'ry mortal joy?
Pleasure must be dash'd with pain:
  And yet, with heedless haste,
  The thirsty boy repeats the taste,
Nor hearkens to despair, but tries the bowl again.
The rills of pleasure never run sincere:
  (Earth has no unpolluted spring:)
From the curs'd soil some dang'rous taint they bear;
So roses grow on thorns, and honey wears a sting.

In vain we seek a heav'n below the sky;
The world has false but flatt'ring charms;
  Its distant joys shew big in our esteem,
But lessen still as they draw near the eye.
  In our embrace the visions die;
  And, when we grasp the airy forms,
    We lose the pleasing dream.

Earth, with her scenes of gay delight.
Is but a landscape rudely drawn,
With glaring colours and false light;
Distance commends it to the sight,
For fools to gaze upon;
But, bring the nauseous daubing nigh,
Coarse and confus'd the hideous figures lie,
Dissolve the pleasure, and offend the eye.

Look up, my soul! pant tow'rd th' eternal hills;
Those heav'ns are fairer than they seem;
There pleasures all sincere glide on in crystal rills;
There not a dreg of guilt defiles,
Nor grief disturbs, the stream.
That Canaan knows no noxious thing,
No cursed soil, no tainted spring,
Nor roses grow on thorns, nor honey wears a sting.

DEATH AND ETERNITY.

My thoughts, that often mount the skies,
Go search the world beneath,
Where nature all in ruin lies,
And owns her sov'reign, Death.

The tyrant, how he triumphs here!
His trophies spread around!
And heaps of dust and bones appear
Through all the hollow ground.

These sculls, what ghastly figures now!
How loathsome to the eyes!
These are the heads we lately knew
So beauteous and so wise.

But where the souls, those deathless things
That left this dying clay?
My thoughts, now stretch out all your wings,
And trace eternity.

O that unfathomable sea!
Those deeps without a shore,

Where living waters gently play,
Or fiery billows roar.

Thus must we leave the banks of life,
And try this doubtful sea;
Vain are our groans, and dying strife,
To gain a moment's stay.

There we shall swim in heav'nly bliss,
Or sink in flaming waves,
While the pale carcase thoughtless lies
Amongst the silent graves.

Some hearty friend shall drop his tear
On our dry bones, and say:
"These once were strong, as mine appear,
And mine must be as they."

Thus shall our mould'ring members teach
What now our senses learn:
For dust and ashes loudest preach
Man's infinite concern.

THE ATHEIST'S MISTAKE.

Laugh, ye profane, and swell and burst
With bold impiety;
Yet shall ye live, for ever curs'd,
And seek in vain to die.

The gasp of your expiring breath
Consigns your souls to chains,
By the last agonies of death
Sent down to fiercer pains.

Ye stand upon a dreadful steep,
And all beneath is hell;
Your weighty guilt will sink you deep
Where the old serpent fell.

When iron slumbers bind your flesh,
With strange surprise you'll find
Immortal vigour spring afresh,
And tortures wake the mind!

Then you'll confess, the frightful names
Of plagues, you scorn'd before,
No more shall look like idle dreams,
Like foolish tales no more.

Then shall ye curse that fatal day,
(With flames upon your tongues,)
When you exchang'd your souls away
For vanity and songs.

Behold, the saints rejoice to die,
For heav'n shines round their heads,
And angel-guards, prepar'd to fly,
Attend their fainting beds.

Their longing spirits part, and rise
To their celestial seat;
Above these ruinable skies
They make their last retreat.

Hence, ye profane! I hate your ways,
I walk with pious souls;
There's a wide diff'rence in our race,
And distant are our goals.

THE WELCOME MESSENGER.

Lord, when we see a saint of thine,
Lie gasping out his breath,
With longing eyes, and looks divine,
Smiling and pleas'd in death;

How we could e'en contend to lay
Our limbs upon that bed!
We ask thine envoy to convey
Our spirits in his stead.

Our souls are rising on the wing
To venture in his place;
For when grim death has lost his sting,
He has an angel's face.

Jesus, then purge my crimes away,
'Tis guilt creates my fears,

'Tis guilt gives death its fierce array,
And all the arms it bears.

Oh! if my threat'ning sins were gone,
And death had lost his sting,
I could invite the angel on,
And chide his lazy wing.

Away these interposing days,
And let the lovers meet;
The angel has a cold embrace,
But kind, and soft, and sweet:

I'd leap at once my seventy years,
I'd rush into his arms,
And lose my breath, and all my cares,
Amidst those heav'nly charms.

Joyful I'd lay this body down,
And leave the lifeless clay,
Without a sigh, without a groan,
And stretch and soar away.

THE FAREWELL.

Dead be my heart to all below,
To mortal joys and mortal cares;
To sensual bliss, that charms us so,
Be dark, my eyes, and deaf, my ears.

Here I renounce my carnal taste
Of the fair fruit that sinners prize:
Their paradise shall never waste
One thought of mine, but to despise.

All earthly joys are over-weigh'd
With mountains of vexatious care;
And where's the sweet that is not laid
A bait to some destructive snare?

Be gone for ever, mortal things!
Thou mighty mole-hill, earth, farewell!
Angels aspire on lofty wings,
And leave the globe for ants to dwell.

Come, heaven, and fill my vast desires,
My soul pursues the sov'reign good:
She was all made of heav'nly fires,
Nor can she live on meaner food.

LAUNCHING INTO ETERNITY.

It was a brave attempt! adventurous he,
Who in the first ship broke the unknown sea:
And, leaving his dear native shores behind,
Trusted his life to the licentious wind.
I see the surging brine: the tempest raves:
He on a pine-plank rides across the waves,
Exulting on the edge of thousand gaping graves:
He steers the winged boat, and shifts the sails,
Conquers the flood, and manages the gales.

Such is the soul that leaves this mortal land,
Fearless, when the great Master gives command!
Death is the storm: she smiles to hear it roar,
And bids the tempest waft her from the shore:
Then with a skilful helm she sweeps the seas,
And manages the raging storm with ease;
"Her faith can govern death;" she spreads her wings
Wide to the wind, and as she sails she sings,
And loses by degrees the sight of mortal things.
As the shores lessen, so her joys arise,
The waves roll gentler, and the tempest dies.
Now vast eternity fills all her sight,
She floats on the broad deep with infinite delight,
The seas for ever calm, the skies for ever bright!

HAPPY FRAILTY.

"How meanly dwells th' immortal mind!
How vile these bodies are!
Why was a clod of earth design'd
T' enclose a heav'nly star?

"Weak cottage where our souls reside!
This flesh a tott'ring wall;
With frightful breaches, gaping wide,
The building bends to fall.

"All round it storms of trouble blow,
And waves of sorrow roll;
Cold waves and winter-storms beat through,
And pain the tenant-soul.

"Alas! how frail our state!" said I;
And thus went mourning on,
Till sudden, from the cleaving sky,
A gleam of glory shone.

My soul all felt the glory come,
And breath'd her native air;
Then she remember'd heaven her home,
And she a pris'ner here.

Strait she began to change her key
And joyful in her pains,
She sang the frailty of her clay
In pleasurable strains.

"How weak the pris'n is where I dwell!
Flesh but a tott'ring wall!
The breaches cheerfully foretel,
The house must shortly fall.

"No more, my friends, shall I complain,
Though all my heart-strings ache;
Welcome, disease, and every pain,
That makes the cottage shake.

"Now let the tempest blow all round,
Now swell the surges high,
And beat this house of bondage down,
To let the stranger fly.

"I have a mansion built above
By the eternal Hand;
And, should the earth's old basis move,
My heav'nly house must stand.

"Yes, for 'tis there my Saviour reigns,
(I long to see the God,)
And his immortal strength sustains
The courts that cost him blood!"

Hark, from on high my Saviour calls:
"I come, my LORD, my LOVE:"
Devotion breaks the prison-walls,
And speeds my last remove.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

WHEN the fierce north wind with his airy forces
Rears up the Baltic to a foaming fury;
And the red lightning, with a storm of hail, comes
Rushing amain down:

How the poor sailors stand amaz'd and tremble!
While the hoarse thunder, like a bloody trumpet,
Roars a loud onset to the gaping waters,
Quick to devour them!

Such shall the noise be, and the wild disorder,
(If things eternal may be like these earthly,)
Such the dire terror, when the great arch-angel
Shakes the creation:

Tears the strong pillars of the vault of heaven,
Breaks up old marble, the repose of princes;
See the graves open, and the bones arising,
Flames all around 'em:

Hark, the shrill outcries of the guilty wretches!
Lively bright horror, and amazing anguish,
Stare through their eye-lids, while the living worm lies
Gnawing within them.

Thoughts, like old vultures, prey upon their heart-strings,
And the smart twinges, when their eye beholds the
Lofty judge frowning, and a flood of vengeance
Rolling afore him.

Hopeless immortals! how they scream and shiver,
While devils push them to the pit wide-yawning,
Hideous and gloomy, to receive them headlong
Down to the centre!

Stop here, my fancy: (all away, ye horrid
Doleful ideas,) come, arise to JESUS!
How he sits God-like! and the saints around him
Thron'd, yet adoring!

O may I sit there when he comes triumphant,
Dooming the nations! then ascend to glory,
While our hosannas, all along the passage,
Shout the Redeemer!

A PROSPECT OF THE RESURRECTION.

How long shall Death, the tyrant, reign
And triumph o'er the just,
While the rich blood of martyrs slain
Lies mingled with the dust?

When shall the tedious might be gone?
When will our LORD appear?
Our fond desires would pray him down
Our love embrace him here.

Let faith arise and climb the hills,
And from afar descry
How distant are his chariot-wheels,
And tell how fast they fly.

Lo, I behold the scatt'ring shades,
The dawn of heav'n appears,
The sweet immortal morning spreads
Its blushes round the spheres.

I see the LORD of Glory come,
And flaming guards around:
The skies divide to make him room,
The trumpet shakes the ground.

I hear the voice, "Ye dead, arise!
And, lo, the graves obey,
And waking saints, with joyful eyes,
Salute th' expected day.

They leave the dust, and on the wing
Rise to the middle air,

In shining garments meet their king,
And low adore him there.

O may my humble spirit stand
Amongst them, cloth'd in white!
The meanest place at his right hand
Is infinite delight.

How will our joy and wonder rise,
When our returning King
Shall bear us homeward through the skies
On love's triumphant wing.

A SIGHT OF HEAVEN IN SICKNESS

Oft have I sat in secret sighs
To feel my flesh decay;
Then groan'd aloud, with frighted eyes,
To view the tott'ring clay.

But I forbid my sorrows now,
Nor dares the flesh complain;
Diseases bring their profits too,
The joy o'ercomes the pain.

My cheerful soul now all the day
Sits waiting here, and sings;
Looks through the ruins of her clay,
And practises her wings.

Faith almost changes into sight,
While from afar she spies
Her fair inheritance in light
Above created skies.

Had but the prison-walls been strong,
And firm without a flaw,
In darkness she had dwelt too long,
And less of glory saw.

But now the everlasting hills
Through ev'ry chink appear,
And something of the joy she feels
While she's a pris'ner here.

The shines of heav'n rush sweetly in
At all the gaping flaws;
Visions of endless bliss are seen,
And native air she draws.

O may these walls stand tott'ring still,
The breaches never close,
If I must here in darkness dwell,
And all this glory lose!

Or rather let this flesh decay,
The ruins wider grow,
Till, glad to see th' enlarged way,
I stretch my pinions through.

FELICITY ABOVE.

No, 'tis in vain to seek for bliss;
For bliss can ne'er be found
Till we arrive where JESUS is,
And tread on heav'nly ground.

There's nothing round these painted skies,
Or round this dusty clod,
Nothing, my soul, that's worth thy joys,
Or lovely as thy GOD.

'Tis heav'n on earth to taste his love,
To feel his quick'ning grace;
And all the heav'n I hope above
Is but to see his face.

Why move my years in slow delay?
O GOD of ages! why?
Let the sphere cleave, and mark my way
To the superior sky.

Dear Sov'reign, break these vital strings
That bind me to my clay;
Take me, URIEL, on thy wings,
And stretch and soar away.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD WORTH DYING FOR: OR, THE DEATH OF MOSES.

LORD, 'tis an infinite delight
To see thy lovely face,
To dwell whole ages in thy sight,
And feel thy vital rays.

This Gabriel knows, and sings thy name
With rapture on his tongue;
Moses the saint enjoys the same,
And heav'n repeats the song.

While the bright nation sounds thy praise
From each eternal hill,
Sweet odours of exhaling grace
The happy region fill.

Thy love, a sea without a shore,
Spreads life and joy abroad:
O 'tis a heav'n worth dying for,
To see a smiling GOD!

Shew me thy face, and I'll away
From all inferior things;
Speak, LORD, and here I quit my clay,
And stretch my airy wings.

Sweet was the journey to the sky
The wond'rous prophet tried;
"Climb up the mount," says GOD, "and die:"
The prophet climb'd and died.

Softly his fainting head he lay
Upon his Maker's breast,
His Maker kiss'd his soul away,
And laid his flesh to rest.

In GOD's own arms he left the breath
That GOD's own spirit gave;
His was the noblest road to death,
And his the sweetest grave.

GOD'S DOMINION AND DECREES.

KEEP silence, all created things
And wait your Maker's nod;
The muse stands trembling while she sings
The honours of her GOD.

Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown,
Hang on his firm decree:
He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be.

Th' almighty voice bade ancient night
Her endless realms resign;
And, lo, ten thousand globes of light
In fields of azure shine.

Now wisdom, with superior sway,
Guides the vast moving frame,
Whilst all the ranks of beings pay
Deep rev'rence to his name.

He spake: The sun obedient stood,
And held the falling day:
Old Jordan backward drives his flood,
And disappoints the sea.

Lord of the armies of the sky,
He marshals all the stars:
Red comets lift their banners high,
And wide proclaim his wars.

Chain'd to the throne, a volume lies,
With all the fates of men,
With ev'ry angel's form and size,
Drawn by th' eternal pen.

His providence unfolds the book,
And makes his counsels shine:
Each op'ning leaf, and ev'ry stroke,
Fulfils some deep design.

Here he exalts neglected worms
To scepters and a crown,

Anon the following page he turns,
And treads the monarch down.

Not Gabriel asks the reason why
Nor God, the reason gives;
Nor dares the fav'rite angel pry
Between the folded leaves.

My God, I never long'd to see
My fate with curious eyes;
What gloomy lines are writ for me,
Or what bright scenes shall rise.

In thy fair book of Life and grace
May I but find my name,
Recorded, in some humble place,
Beneath my Lord, the Lamb!

THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE.

Far in the heav'ns my God retires
My God, the mark of my desires,
And hides his lovely face.
When he descends within my view,
He charms my reason to pursue,
But leaves it tir'd and fainting in th' unequal chace.

Or, if I reach unusual height,
Till near his presence brought,
There floods of glory check my flight,
Cramp the bold pinions of my wit,
And all untune my thought;
Plung'd in a sea of light I roll,
Where Wisdom, Justice, Mercy, shines
Infinite rays, in crossing lines,
Beat thick confusion on my sight, and overwhelm my soul.

Come to my aid, ye fellow-minds,
And help me reach the throne;
(What single strength in vain designs
United force hath done;

Thus worms may join, and grasp the poles,
Thus atoms fill the sea;)
But the whole race of creature-souls,
Stretch'd to their last extent of thought, plunge and are lost in thee.

Great God, behold, my reason lies
Adoring, yet my love would rise
On pinions not her own.
Faith shall direct her humble flight,
Through all the trackless seas of light,
To thee, th' eternal Fair, the infinite Unknown!

TRUE WISDOM.

Pronounce him blest, my muse, whom Wisdom guides
In her own path to her own heav'nly seat;
Through all the storms his soul securely glides,
Nor can the tempests, nor the tides,
That rise and roar around, supplant his steady feet.

Earth, you may let your golden arrows fly,
And seek in vain a passage to his breast,
Spread all your painted toys to court his eye,
He smiles, and sees them vainly try
To lure his soul aside from her eternal rest.

Our head-strong lusts, like a young fiery horse,
Start, and flee raging in a violent course;
He tames and breaks them, manages and rides 'em,
Checks their career, and turns and guides 'em,
And bids his reason bridle their licentious force.

Lord of himself, he rules his wildest thoughts,
And boldly acts what calmly he design'd,
While he looks down and pities human faults;
Nor can he think, nor can he find,
A plague like reigning passions, and a subject mind

But, oh! 'tis mighty toil to reach this height,
To vanquish self is a laborious art;
What manly courage to sustain the fight,

To bear the noble pain, and part
With those dear charming tempters rooted in the heart.

'Tis hard to stand when all the passions move,
Hard to awake the eye that passion blinds,
To rend and tear out this unhappy love,
That clings so close about our minds,
And where th' enchanted soul so sweet a poison finds.

Hard; but it may be done. Come, heav'nly fire,
Home to my breast, and with one pow'rful ray
Melt off my lusts, my fetters: I can bear
A while to be a tenant here,
But not be chain'd and prison'd in a cage of clay.

Heav'n is my home and I must use my wings;
Sublime above the globe my flight aspires:
I have a soul was made to pity kings,
And all their little glittering things:
I have a soul was made for infinite desires.

Loos'd from the earth, my heart is upward flown;
Farewell, my friends, and all that once was mine;
Now, should you fix my feet on Cæsar's throne,
Crown me, and call the world my own,
The gold that binds my brows could ne'er my soul confine

I am the Lord's and Jesus is my love;
He, the dear God, shall fill my vast desire,
My flesh below; yet I can dwell above,
And nearer to my Saviour move;
There all my soul shall centre, all my pow'rs conspire.

Thus I with angels live; thus, half divine,
I sit on high, nor mind inferior joys:
Fill'd with his love, I feel that God is mine,
His glory is my great design,
That everlasting project all my thoughts employs.

CHRIST DYING, RISING, AND REIGNING.

He dies! the heav'nly Lover dies!
The tidings strike a doleful sound
On my poor heart-strings: Deep he lies
In the cold caverns of the ground!

Come, saints, and drop a tear or two
On the dear bosom of your God;
He sheds a thousand drops for you,
A thousand drops of richer blood!

Here's love and grief beyond degree,
The Lord of glory dies for men!
But, lo, what sudden joys I see!
Jesus the dead revives again.

The rising God forsakes the tomb,
Up to his Father's court he flies;
Cherubic legions guard him home
And shout him welcome to the skies.

Break off your tears, ye saints, and tell
How high our great deliv'rer reigns;
Sing how he spoil'd the hosts of hell,
And led the monster Death in chains.

Say, "Live for ever, wond'rous King!
Born to redeem, and strong to save!"
Then ask the monster, "Where's his sting?
"And where's thy victory, boasting grave?"

THE SONG OF ANGELS ABOVE.

Earth has detain'd me prisoner long,
And I'm grown weary now:
My heart, my hand, my ear, my tongue,
There's nothing here for you.

Tir'd in my thoughts, I stretch me down,
And upward glance mine eyes;
Upward, my Father, to thy throne,
And to my native skies.

There the dear MAN, my Saviour, sits,
The GOD, how bright he shines!
And scatters infinite delights
On all the happy minds.

Seraphs, with elevated strains,
Circle the throne around,
And move and charm the starry plains
With an immortal sound.

JESUS, the LORD, their harps employs,
JESUS, my love, they sing;
JESUS, the name of both our joys,
Sounds sweet from ev'ry string.

Hark, how, beyond the narrow bounds
Of time and space, they run,
And speak, in most majestic sounds,
The godhead of the SON.

How on the Father's breast he lay,
The darling of his soul,
Infinite years before the day
Or heavens began to roll.

And now they sink the lofty tone,
And gentler notes they play,
And bring th' eternal Godhead down
To dwell in humble clay.

O sacred beauties of the MAN!
(The GOD resides within;)
His flesh all pure, without a stain,
His soul without a sin.

Then, how he look'd and how he smil'd,
What wond'rous things he said!
Sweet cherubs, stay, dwell here a while,
And tell what JESUS did.

At his command the blind awake
And feel the gladsome rays;
He bids the dumb attempt to speak,
They try their tongues in praise.

He shed a thousand blessings round
Where'er he turn'd his eye;
He spoke, and, at the sov'reign sound,
The hellish legions fly.

Thus, while, with unambitious strife,
Th' ethereal minstrels rove
Through all the labours of his life,
And wonders of his love:

In the full choir a broken string
Groans with a strange surprise;
The rest in silence mourn their King,
That bleeds, and loves, and dies.

Seraph and saint, with dropping wings,
Cease their harmonious breath;
No blooming trees, nor bubbling springs,
While JESUS sleeps in death.

Then all at once to living strains
They summon every chord,
Break up the tomb, and burst his chains,
And shew their rising LORD.

Around, the flaming army throngs,
To guard him to the skies,
With loud hosannas on their tongues,
And triumph in their eyes.

In awful state the conqu'ring GOD
Ascends his shining throne,
While tuneful angels sound abroad
The vict'ries he has won.

Now let me rise, and join their song,
And be an angel too;
My heart, my hand, my ear, my tongue,
Here's joyful work for you.

I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise
Oh for some heavenly notes, to bear
My spirit to the skies!

There, ye that love my Saviour, sit,
  There I would fain have place,
Among your thrones, or at your feet,
  So I might see his face.

I am confin'd to earth no more,
  But mount in haste above,
To bless the God that I adore,
  And sing the MAN I love.

TWO HAPPY RIVALS, DEVOTION AND THE MUSE.

WILD as the lightning, various as the moon,
  Roves my Pindaric song:
Here she glows, like burning noon,
In fiercest flames, and here she plays
Gentle as star-beams on the midnight seas;
  Now in a smiling angel's form,
  Anon she rides upon the storm,
Loud as the noisy thunder, as a deluge strong,
  Are my thoughts and wishes free,
And know no number nor degree!
  Such is the muse: Lo she disdains
    The links and chains,
Measures and rules of vulgar strains,
And o'er the laws of harmony a sov'reign queen she reigns!

  If she roves
  By streams or groves,
Tuning her pleasures or her pains,
My passion keeps her still in sight,
My passion holds an equal flight
Through love's or nature's wide campaigns.
  If, with bold attempt she sings
  Of the biggest mortal things,
Tott'ring thrones and nations slain;
  Or breaks the fleets of warring kings,
    While thunders roar
    From shore to shore,
  My soul sits fast upon her wings,
And sweeps the crimson surge, or scours the purple plain;

Still I attend her, as she flies,
Round the broad globe, and all beneath the skies.

But, when from the meridian star
Long streaks of glory shine,
And heav'n invites her from afar,
She takes the hint, she knows the sign,
The muse ascends her heavenly car,
And climbs the steepy path and means the throne divine:
Then she leaves my flutt'ring mind,
Clogg'd with clay and unrefin'd;
Lengths of distance far behind,
Virtue lags with heavy wheel;
Faith has wings but cannot rise,
Cannot rise,——swift and high,
As the winged numbers fly,
And faint Devotion panting lies
Half way th' ethereal hill.

O why is piety so weak,
And yet the muse so strong?
When shall these hateful fetters break
That have confin'd me long?
Inward a glowing heat I feel,
A spark of heav'nly day;
But earthly vapours damp my zeal,
And heavy flesh drags me the downward way.
Faint are the efforts of my will,
And mortal passion charms my soul astray.
Shine, thou sweet hour of dear release,
Shine from the sky,
And call me high,
To mingle with the choirs of glory and of bliss.
Devotion there begins the flight,
Awakes the song, and guides the way;
There love and zeal, divine and bright,
Trace out new regions in the world of light,
And scarce the boldest muse can follow or obey.

I'm in a dream, and fancy reigns,
She spreads her gay delusive scenes;
Or is the vision true?

Behold RELIGION on her throne,
In awful state descending down,
And her dominions vast and bright within my spacious view.
She smiles, and with a courteous hand
She beckons me away;
I feel mine airy pow'rs loose from the cumb'rous clay,
And with a joyful haste obey
RELIGION's high command.
What lengths, and heights, and depths, unknown
Broad fields with blooming glory sown,
And seas, and skies, and stars, her own,
In an unmeasur'd sphere!
What heav'ns of joy, and light serene,
Which nor the rolling sun has seen,
Where nor the roving Muse has been,
That greater traveller!

A long farewell to all below,
Farewell to all that sense can shew,
To golden scenes, and flow'ry fields,
To all the worlds that fancy builds,
And all that poets know.
Now the swift transports of the mind
Leave the fluttering muse behind,
A thousand loose Pindaric plumes fly scattering down the wind.
Among the clouds I lose my breath,
The rapture grows too strong:
The feeble pow'rs that nature gave
Faint and drop downward to the grave;
Receive their fall, thou treasurer of death;
I will no more demand my tongue,
Till the gross organ, well refin'd,
Can trace the boundless flights of an unfetter'd mind,
And raise an equal song!

COME, LORD JESUS.

WHEN shall thy lovely face be seen?
When shall our eyes behold our GOD?
What lengths of distance lie between,
And hills of guilt. A heavy load!

Our months are ages of delay,
And slowly every minute wears:
Fly, winged time, and roll away
These tedious rounds of sluggish years.

Ye heav'nly gates, loose all your chains,
Let the eternal pillars bow;
Blest Saviour, cleave the starry plains,
And make the crystal mountains flow.

Hark, how thy saints unite their cries,
And pray and wait the general doom:
Come, thou, *the soul of all our joys*,
Thou, *the desire of nations*, come.

Put thy bright robes of triumph on,
And bless our eyes, and bless our ears,
Thou absent Love, thou dear *unknown*,
Thou *fairest of ten thousand fairs*.

Our heart-strings groan with deep complaint,
Our flesh lies panting, Lord, for thee,
And every limb, and every joint,
Stretches for immortality.

Our spirits shake their eager wings,
And burn to meet thy flying throne:
We rise away from mortal things
T' attend thy shining chariot down.

Now let our cheerful eyes survey
The blazing earth and melting hills,
And smile to see the lightnings play,
And flash along before thy wheels.

O for a shout of violent joys
To join the trumpet's thund'ring sound!
The angel herald shakes the skies,
Awakes the graves, and tears the ground.

Ye slumb'ring saints, a heav'nly host
Stands waiting at your gaping tombs;

Let every sacred sleeping dust
Leap into life, for Jesus comes.

Jesus, the God of might and love,
New moulds our limbs of cumb'rous clay;
Quick as seraphic flames we move,
Active, and young, and fair, as they.

Our airy feet with unknown flight,
Swift as the motions of desire,
Run up the hills of heav'nly light,
And leave the welt'ring world in fire.

A SIGHT OF CHRIST.

Angels of light, your God and King surround
With noble songs; in his exalted flesh
He claims your worship; while his saints on earth
Bless their Redeemer-God with humble tongues.
Angels, with lofty honours crown his head;
We, bowing at his feet by faith, may feel
His distant influence, and confess his love.

Once I beheld his face, when beams divine
Broke from his eye-lids, and unusual light
Wrapt me at once in glory and surprise.
My joyful heart, high-leaping in my breast,
With transport cried, "This is the Christ of God!"
Then threw my arms around in sweet embrace,
And clasp'd, and bow'd, adoring low, till I was lost in him.

While he appears, no other charms can hold
Or draw my soul, asham'd of former things,
Which no remembrance now deserve, or name,
Though with contempt; best in oblivion hid.

But the bright shine and presence soon withdrew;
I sought him whom I love, but found him not;
I felt his absence; and with strongest cries
Proclaim'd, "Where Jesus is not, all is vain!"
Whether I hold him with a full delight,
Or seek him panting with extreme desire,

'Tis he alone can please my wond'ring soul;
To hold or seek him is my only choice.
If he refrain on me to cast his eye
Down from his palace, nor my longing soul
With upward look can spy my dearest LORD
Through his blue pavement, I'll behold him still
With sweet reflection, on the peaceful cross,
All in his blood and anguish groaning deep
Gasping and dying there!——————
This sight I ne'er can lose, by it I live:
A quick'ning virtue, from his death inspired,
Is life and breath to me: his flesh my food;
His vital blood I drink, and hence my strength.

I live, I'm strong, and now eternal life
Beats quick within my breast; my vigorous mind
Spurns the dull earth, and on her fiery wings
Reaches the mount of purposes divine,
Counsels of peace betwixt th' almighty Three,
Conceiv'd at once, and sign'd without debate,
In perfect union of th' eternal mind.
With vast amaze I see th' unfathom'd thoughts,
Infinite schemes, and infinite designs,
Of GOD's own heart, in which he ever rests.
Eternity lies open to my view;
Here the beginning and the end of all
I can discover; CHRIST the end of all,
And CHRIST the great beginning; he my head,
My GOD, my glory, and my all in all.

O that the day, the joyful day, were come,
When the first Adam from his ancient dust,
Crown'd with new honours, shall revive, and see
JESUS his son and lord; while shouting saints
Surround their King, and GOD's eternal Son
Shines in the midst but with surperior beams,
And like himself; then the mysterious WORD,
Long hid behind the letter, shall appear
All spirit and life, and in the fullest light
Stand forth to public view; and there disclose
His Father's sacred works, and wond'rous ways:
Then wisdom, righteousness, and grace divine,

Through all the infinite transactions past,
Inwrought and shining, shall with double blaze
Strike our astonish'd eyes, and ever reign,
Admir'd and glorious, in triumphant light.

Death, and the tempter, and the man of sin,
Now at the bar arraign'd, in judgment cast,
Shall vex the saints no more: but perfect love
And loudest praises perfect joy create,
While ever circling years maintain the blissful state

THE END.